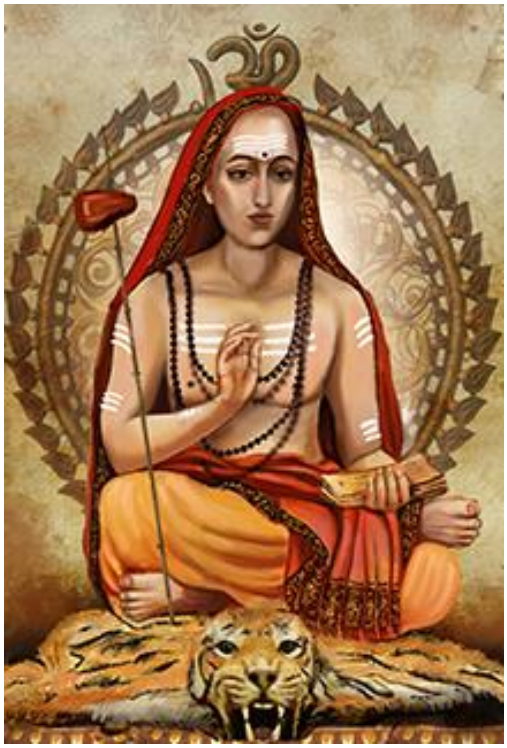
Guidance for those seeking Liberation

(Eligibility – Practice – Self-Knowledge)

An Interpretation of Sri Sajjanagada Ramaswamiji's
Mumukṣu Hitabodha

Editor: Brahmachari Sutejas
Source Text available:
https://adhyatmaprakasha.org
(Draft July 2024)



ओं नमो ब्रह्मादिभ्यो ब्रह्मविद्यासंप्रदायकर्तृभ्यो |
वंशर्षिभ्यो नमो महद्भ्यो नमो गुरुभ्यः ||

Dedicated to Adi Śaṃkarācārya Bhagavatpāda

|| Jai Shri Ram ||

Blessings from the most venerable Sri Sri Sri Paramahamsa Satchidanandendra Saraswati Swamiji

We have seen the book ‘Mumukṣu Hitabodha’ written by Sri Sajjanagada Ramaswami. The author is a renunciate and a spiritual seeker. With the intention of benefiting people, he has written this book primarily based on spiritual principles in simple Kannada, particularly for spiritual aspirants. He has explained the topics clearly, making them easy to grasp through intermittent examples and illustrations.

We convey with the remembrance of Nārāyaṇa, that this first attempt of the author to write a book may be helpful for spiritual seekers on their path of spiritual inquiry.

Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya Holenarasipur
As per Sri Sri's order, the scholar in attendance
H.S. Lakshminarasimha Murthy
Date: 5-2-1966

Salutations to the revered Shri Sajjanagada Ramaswami

I am delighted to have read your book ‘Mumukṣu Hitabodha’. There is nothing left for me to say about this work that has received the blessings of Sri Sri. Nevertheless, I write a few words in response to your call for trust. True to its name, the book teaches only what is beneficial for seekers of liberation, which is mokṣā, the supreme goal of human life. The exposition is **in accordance with the doctrine of Adi Śaṃkarācārya Bhagavatpāda**, and the style is simple. Appropriate instructions for spiritual aspirants are also given here. Vernacular texts like 'Dasabodha' have been incorporated into the selection of authoritative sources. The subject matter flows smoothly in an elegant manner.

vedantacorpus.org

I am pleased to announce that this invaluable book, which is understandable even to ordinary people, is entirely suitable for all mumukṣus.

Salutations!
H.S. Lakshminarasimha Murthy, Scholar
Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya, Holenarasipur
Date: 5-7-1966

|| Jai Shri Gurudev Datta ||

The Ultimate Reality, which is our true nature, is 'Atman', and it is the essence of the entire universe. It is the Reality that is not perceivable by the senses or mind, but can only be experienced (intuited). Nevertheless, it is possible for humans to gradually train the mind, turn it towards this experiential Ultimate Reality, and reach a state of being established in it - this is the core teaching of the Upanishads. In accordance with this teaching, if one becomes established in that Supreme Principle, all the sorrows of worldly existence will be removed, and one will experience (intuit) everything as Brahman (the Absolute) while still alive.

Those who strive to understand the essence, along with practices that have been expounded in the scriptures regarding the ultimate Truth are called ‘Mumukṣus’ (seekers of liberation). This book, which provides beneficial teachings and guidance to such Mumukṣus, is aptly named ‘Mumukṣu Hitabodha’. The author of this work, 'Sri Ramaswami', is a renunciate who belongs to the lineage of realized beings like Sri Samartha Ramdas Mahaswami. He has traveled extensively, gained insights from many holy persons, and is a life-long celibate (naiṣṭhika brahmacāri) who has practiced and experienced the teachings himself.

There is no doubt that the words and writings of such a person will be completely beneficial for seekers.

vedantacorpus.org

I hope that the Lord will bless the aspirants in Karnataka to especially benefit from this text, making the author's efforts fruitful.

Ashadha Krishna Tritiya
Shri Gurudev Datta
Shri Devaraya Kulkarni (Hombal)
Date: 3-5-1966

The well-known Shri Sajjanagada Ramaswami is nispṛha (indifferent). He has devoted his life to the ultimate Truth. For the service of many Mumukṣus, he has previously published this treatise in Telugu, and now in Kannada. Those aiming for liberation (mokṣā) should take advantage of this.

Sri Segu Venugopala Brahmachari

vedantacorpus.org

Author's Preface to the Second Edition

This book originally took the form of letters written in response to questions from spiritual seekers. Later, in 1954, during the four-month rainy season retreat at the Gita Prachar Mandali in Bangalore Cantonment, it was published as a book of questions and answers in Telugu, as per the request of seekers there. Later, in 1955, it was composed in Kannada at the request of the Kannada speakers. Initially, it contained only the section on Self-Knowledge. Recently, with the desire that it should be beneficial to all, in 1956 it was expanded into three sections - Eligibility, Spiritual Practice (sādhana), and Self-Knowledge. The mighty Sadguru, who resides as the inner controller in the form of the Self, inspired me to compose this book. This was first reviewed by my most revered Guru, Bhagavān Sri Sridhar Swami, who graciously suggested some corrections. Later, the most venerable ascetic Sadguru Sri Sri Satchidanandendra Saraswati Swami of Holenarasipur also reviewed it and offered some suggestions. He has also blessed this book.

My dear friend and spiritual companion Sri Devaraya Kulkarni (Hombala) of Bangalore thoroughly revised this and added some contextual edits. Sri H.S. Lakshminarasimha Murthy, the erudite scholar at the Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya in Holenarasipur, reviewed the final portion, made it suitable for printing, corrected printing errors, and greatly assisted with this work. I am grateful to all of them. Sri Khode Ramachandrasa, proprietor of Messrs. Khode Ishwarsa & Sons in Bangalore, has provided the necessary paper for publishing this book in memory of his late revered father.

In memory of mother and father, Smt. Nagamma and Sri Lakshmana Sara, and Sri K.L. Gopalakrishna Shetty (Builder and Land Developer) from Hanumanthanagar, Bangalore, who has provided financial assistance of Rs.1001. We are grateful to these noble people. The Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya of Holenarasipur has undertaken the entire responsibility of

vedantacorpus.org

publishing this book. I pray that the Supreme Lord may bless all of them with devotion, knowledge, and detachment. I offer this humble service at the lotus feet of the indwelling Nārāyaṇa, who is the cause and inspiration for the composition of this book.

Jaya Jaya Raghuvīra Samartha
Ramaswami, resident of Sajjanagad
Author
(The author himself has written this preface to suit the second edition).
Date: 2-2-1998

Publisher's Note for the Third Edition

The venerable Sajjanagada Ramaswamiji, who is the author of this text, a devotee of the Guru, a revered renunciate, has comprehensively explained the uniqueness and thoughts of this text in the preface to the second edition. When requested for his blessings for the third edition, he opined that due to his advanced age, it would be appropriate for the office to write a suitable note and publish it through the office itself, expressing joy if it proves useful for spiritual seekers. Furthermore, the author has surrendered all rights (copyrights) of this book to the office and has also graciously donated Rs. 1000 for the publication of the text. The office offers grateful salutations to this great devotee of the Guru. The third edition is being brought out without any changes to the body of the text, only correcting printing errors.

On behalf of the office, we offer our salutations to all the above devotees. We pray that seekers of liberation (mumukshus) will obtain this text and encourage its publication so that spiritual aspirants can easily acquire books at affordable prices and benefit from them.

Vikruti Samvatsara, Margashira,
Bahula Ashtami (Sadguru's Jayanti)
Date: 28-12-2008

vedantacorpus.org

Dedication and Purpose

Om Namo NamaH!

By the grace of Bhagavān in the form of Guruji Sri Swamini Svatmavidyanandaji and many other Mahātmās, it is now possible to reveal the immortal nectar of many unpublished and forgotten manuscripts, assisted by the seemingly limitless possibilities of today's artificial intelligence systems.

This gem is dedicated primarily to a seeker, Smt. Radha, and her journey, as well as to another dear friend, Smt. Manjushree who has inspired me in many ways.

This is not a literal translation, but an interpretation, revised with my understanding to the best of my abilities. Finally, I would like to thank my parents for their ongoing support.

In gratitude to the Most High
Brahmachari Sutejas
Date: 07-21-2024

vedantacorpus.org

Table of Contents

Section 1 – Eligibility (adhikāritvam) of a True Seeker **1**
1. Human in animal form **1**
2. Who is truly human? **2**
3. Who is a Mumukṣu? **3**
4. A True Guru is rare **4**
5. Purpose of human birth **6**
6. Importance of the human body **7**
7. Significance of Self-Knowledge (ātmajñānam) **8**
8. How to attain Self-Knowledge? **12**
9. What is listening (śravaṇam)? **13**
10. What is reflection (mananam)? **13**
11. What is contemplation (nididhyāsanam)? **13**
12. The necessity of a true Guru **14**
13. Who is a true Guru? **15**
14. Who is qualified for Self-Knowledge? **19**
15. Characteristics of a Jijñāsu **22**
16. Who is a true disciple? **24**
17. Practices towards Self-Knowledge **26**
18. Four types of Guru service (gurusevā) **27**
19. The Main Duty of the Seeker of Liberation **31**
20. How does qualification (adhikāritvam) arise? **34**
21. What is devotion (bhakti)? **35**
22. Devotion is an easy practice **36**
23. Even sinners can become virtuous **36**
24. Everything is service to the Supreme Self **38**
25. What is the fruit of serving the Supreme Self? **40**
26. Nine types of devotion **42**

vedantacorpus.org

Section 2 – On Spiritiual Practice (sādhana) **48**
1. The world is not real **49**
2. There is no happiness in the world **51**
3. There is no happiness in sensory enjoyments, only suffering **53**
4. One loses power through sensual enjoyments **54**
5. The objects of enjoyment consume the enjoyer **56**
6. Rebirth is due to desire for sense objects **56**
7. Who attains eternal happiness? **58**
8. Eternal bliss is within oneself **60**
9. Method to fix the mind on the Supreme Self **61**
10. The importance of śravaṇam (to spiritual teachings) **62**
11. What should one listen to? **66**
12. The importance of mananam (reflection) **68**
13. The importance of meditating on the Guru **69**
14. Supportive means to attain eternal happiness **70**
15. Who is a spiritual aspirant (sādhaka)? **73**
Section 3 – On Self-Knowledge (ātmajñāna) **75**
1. Liberation (mokṣa) is through Self-knowledge alone **75**
2. What is ignorance (ajñānam)? **82**
3. What is the result of ignorance? **83**
4. What is liberation (mokṣa)? **84**
5. What is knowledge (jñānam)? **85**
6. No one is bound **87**
7. The understanding of the enlightened one (jñānī) **92**
8. This body is not me **94**
9. The individual soul is not the Self, individuality is mithyā **101**
10. One's true nature is the Self (ātmasvarūpam) **107**
11. What is the nature of the Supreme Self? **112**

12. I am the Supreme Self **115**
13. I am actionless (niṣkriya) **121**
14. This world (saṃsāra) is like a dream **124**
15. Even the world is of the nature of the Supreme Self **128**
16. The mind is imagined (kalpita) in the Self **132**
17. Contemplation on one's True Nature **136**
18. Characteristics of the state of perfection **141**
19. How is the vision of the enlightened one (jñānī-dṛṣṭi)? **142**
20. Guidelines for for spiritual seekers **145**
Remembering the Founder **146**

vedantacorpus.org

Jaya Jaya Raghuvīra Samartha

One with complete detachment like Shuka,
With knowledge of yoga like Vasishtha,
Respected like the poet Valmiki,
My salutations to Sadguru Ramdas.

Lord Gaṇeśa, Śāradā (Ma Sarasvatī), and the Sadguru, as well as noble people; the secret worshipped deity, all of these are Lord Rāma (Raghunandana).

| Om śrīgurubhyo namaḥ |

Section 1 – Eligibility (adhikāritvam) of a True Seeker

Who is qualified for Self-Knowledge?

"*These three are difficult to obtain: to be born as a man, to have the longing for release and the association with great souls. They are the results of divine grace.*"
(Vivekachudamani 3)

1. Human in animal form

Firstly, attaining true human nature is rare. Even after being born human, most people retain an animal-like mentality. Without discrimination (viveka) between righteousness and unrighteousness, they act as they please. Like animals, they remain constantly engaged in food, sleep, fear, and procreation. Those who are attached to worldly objects; who consider this to be man's duty and purpose; who have no devotion or service towards the Supreme Self or great souls, not even in the slightest; who transgress the injunctions of scripture and do not follow the duties of their caste and stage of life, acting according to their own whims; who do not practice charity,

vedantacorpus.org

righteousness or helping others; who acquire objects by any means, whether through unrighteousness, deceit, fraud or violence; who indulge in those objects; who consider this worldly existence to be permanent - such people with this mentality are not really human, they are merely two-legged beasts. Because:

āhāranidrābhayamaithunāni sāmānyametatpaśubhirnarāṇām | (Mahā-subhāṣita-saṅgrahaḥ, 5700a)
"*Hunger, sleep, fear and copulation are common to men and cattle.*"

āhāra-nidrā-bhaya-maithunāni sāmānyam etat paśubhir narāṇām | jñānaṃ narāṇām adhiko viśeṣo jñānena hīnāḥ paśubhiḥ samānāḥ || (Hitopadeśa 0.25)
"*Food, sleep, fear and the enjoyment of external pleasures - these men share in common with beasts; surely the sense of duty is their special attribute; devoid of this, they are degraded to the level of beasts*."
(English Transl.: Hitopadeśa of Nārāyaṇa. M. R. Kale)

Animals also eat food, sleep, experience fear, and mate just like humans. There is no difference between humans and animals in these activities. If a person born as a human only does these things, how can he be considered human? Without discrimination (viveka) and discernment (vicāra), without the knowledge to distinguish the essential from the non-essential (sārāsāra), what difference is there between him and an animal? Such a one is not human! He is merely an animal in human form.

2. Who is truly human?

One who acts righteously as prescribed in the scriptures and taught by great souls, abandoning unrighteousness; who follows the duties of his caste and stage of life; who has devotion towards the Supreme Self and great souls; who serves them according to his capacity through body, mind and wealth;

vedantacorpus.org

who practices charity, righteousness and helping others according to his ability; who does not deceive, betray, cheat or harm anyone; who feels compassion when others are suffering, one who helps others according to their ability; sees everyone with love; considers guests who come home as manifestations of the Supreme Self and serves them with love to the best of their ability; acts with discrimination and reasoning (viveka-vicāra) without succumbing to desires and anger; gives up negative tendencies and cultivates positive ones; practices meditation (dhyāna), chanting (japa) and austerities (tapādi) focused on the Supreme Self - one who lives righteously in this manner is considered a true human being.

3. Who is a Mumukṣu?

Even after attaining human birth, it is rare to become a mumukṣu. Mumukṣutvam means: Who am I? Why have I taken this human birth? What is my duty? Why am I bound to this worldly life (saṃsāra)? Why do I experience sorrow? How can I be liberated from these? Is there eternal happiness free from sorrow? If so, what is it like? Where is it? What should I do to attain it? How can I be freed from the cycle of birth and death? What is bondage? What is liberation? Who am I? Who is God? What is my relationship with God? One who has the desire to deeply contemplate these questions within oneself and understand one's true nature is called a mumukṣu.

One who has the longing to know their true nature, be freed from all cycles of suffering like birth and death, seek a true Guru, serve them, practice spiritual disciplines (sādhana) as instructed, and attain supreme bliss - such a person is called a mumukṣu (or has mumukṣutvam).

This mumukṣutvam is rare to attain. As the Lord says in the Bhagavad Gita (7.3):

manuṣyāṇāṃ sahasreṣu kaścidyatati siddhaye ।

vedantacorpus.org

yatatāmapi siddhānāṃ kaścinmāṃ vetti tattvataḥ ॥ 7.3
“*Among thousands of men, one perchance strives for perfection; even among those who strive and are perfect, only one perchance knows me in truth.*”

Only by the grace of the Supreme Self does mumukṣutvam arise.

4. A True Guru is rare

Even if the desire for liberation arises (mumukṣutvam), finding a proper true guru is very rare. There may be many who are established in Brahman (brahmaniṣṭha) and well-versed in the Vedas and Vedangas. However, it is extremely rare to find a true guru who can explain clearly to the seeker, destroy their ignorance and the resulting chain of sorrows, remove all doubts, and bestow complete eternal bliss (‘fulfillment’) and supreme peace (paramaśānti). Finding such a guru is possible only if one has accumulated merits from many past lives, including those of ancestors. Otherwise, one encounters:

“*There are many teachers who take away the wealth of their disciples; but rare are the teachers who take away the suffering of their disciples' hearts*."

The world is full of untruthful gurus in disguise who, through various means and sweet words, do not seek the welfare of the seekers who surrender to them. Without properly teaching, they somehow try to rob the disciple's wealth by saying or doing anything.

But a true guru is one who expounds the truth, teaches devotion, knowledge and dispassion, and strives to lead the disciple from misconduct to good conduct, from non-discrimination to right discrimination (suvicāra), from lust and anger to peace and self-control (śamadamādi), and from

attachment and aversion to friendliness, compassion and equanimity (karuṇa upekṣādi).

A true guru removes all afflictions from the disciple's mind. A true guru eliminates the notion of body as self (dehātmabuddhi) and establishes the understanding of the true Self (satyātmabuddhi). A true guru brings the experiential recognition (anubhava) that there is no diversity, no world, no cycle of rebirth (saṃsāra) - all this is mere imagination (kalpanāmātra).

Lord Shiva tells Pārvatī in the Guru Gita that finding such a true guru is extremely rare.

Also, “*He who freely does anything whatever the mind suggests, and does not observe any discretion is not a Guru. He is just like a beggar, hungy of objects. Those who do not advise the disciple to do spiritual study, and do not guide him how to control his sense-organs, maybe available even three a penny, but they must be discarded.*” (Dasabodha 5.2.20-21)

A guru who succumbs to the disciple's flattery, does not make them perform proper spiritual practices, does not help them overcome sense attachments, does not teach sense control, and allows them to act according to their whims - such a guru is not a true guru, but a servant of death. For what purpose? The sufferings that were already being experienced due to sense attachments - have they reduced? What new benefit has come from making such a person a guru? Therefore, it is wrong to even call such a person a guru," says Sadguru Samarth Ramdas Swami. To find a true guru who imparts pure knowledge, removes body-identification, helps overcome sense attachments, and always instills righteous conduct and Self-abidance, one must first take refuge in the Supreme Self, who is the Guru of all gurus. By His grace alone does one attain a true guru.

vedantacorpus.org

5. Purpose of human birth

"*If this body is used for search for Truth, the spiritual path, then only it becomes useful, otherwise it is wasted by various calamities on the path towards death*."
(Dasabodha 1.10.61)

This body becomes meaningful only if it is used for attaining the Supreme Self. Otherwise, it goes to waste, becoming food for death after suffering various blows.

"*It is common knowledge and everybody speaks that there is no chance of liberation in the body of animals and only after taking birth as a human being it is possible to reach higher worlds.*"
(Dasabodha 1.10.21)

The human body is given to the soul for the purpose of realizing its true nature, not merely for sensual enjoyments like animals. The Vedas declare and great souls teach that it is not possible to attain liberation and intuit one's true nature in any body other than the human form. Therefore, this human birth is obtained for the sake of becoming free from the cycle of birth and death (saṃsāra). The purpose of this body is fulfilled only when one realizes their true nature as the Self. One who realizes his true Self beyond the mind becomes truly enlightened. He becomes immortal. He attains Supreme bliss.

"*The greatest fool of all the fools is one who mistakenly feels happy in worldly life; because, there is no sorrow equal to the sorrow of this mundane life (saṃsāra).*"
(Dasbodha 2.10.40)

One who thinks there is happiness only in worldly life is indeed the king of fools. There is no greater sorrow than the sorrow of saṃsāra (worldly existence). One who considers sensual pleasures as happiness is no better than an animal in human form.

6. Importance of the human body

iha cedaśakadboddhuṃ prākśarīrasya visrasaḥ |
tataḥ sargeṣu lokeṣu śarīratvāya kalpate ||
(Katha Upanishad 2.3.4)
"*If one could know here prior to the falling of the body, (one becomes liberated); (if not), one becomes fit to be embodied in the worlds of creatures.*"

If one is able to intuit the Supreme Self, which is one's true nature, in this very life before the fall of this body, he becomes liberated from all worldly bondage and free from birth and death. Those who realize their true nature from a Sadguru in childhood itself, before getting entangled in sense objects, when the heart is still pure - like Prahlāda and others - they are the best. They are truly blessed. If this is not possible, one should strive to attain Self-knowledge in the prime of life.

The wise ones are those who strive to attain liberation while the body still has strength, the senses are capable, and the intellect has the power of discrimination etc. (vicāra) - before old age sets in. If this is not possible and youth has passed, one should at least try to gain Self-knowledge in old age, without getting immersed in worldly (sāṃsārika) concerns. The main goal is to become liberated before the life-breath departs.

If one does not realize one's true nature and attain Self-knowledge in this human body, one cannot escape the cycle of birth and death. One will have to repeatedly suffer in various realms like heaven and hell due to the fruits of good and bad actions (puṇyapāpādikarma). One will have to take birth in many wombs and experience various hardships.

Apart from the human body, Self-knowledge cannot be clearly attained in other realms or divine bodies (devatādi-śarīra) as it can be in this human birth in this world. On this matter, the scriptures state:

vedantacorpus.org

yathādarśe tathātmani yathā svapne tathā pitṛloke |
yathāpsu parīva dadṛśe tathā gandharvaloke cchāyātapayoriva brahmaloke || (Katha Upanishad 2.3.5)
"*As in a mirror, so in one's intellect; as in a dream, so in the world of manes; as seen in water, so in the world of the Gandharvas; as in the case of shade and light, so in the world of Brahma.*"

Adi Shankara comments: tasmādātmadarśanāya ihaiva yatnaḥ kartavya ityabhiprāyaḥ | (Katha Upanishad 2.3.5 Bhāṣyam)
"*Therefore, efforts should be made for the realization of the Self here itself. This is the idea.*"

Just as one's face is clearly reflected in a mirror the Self is clearly perceived in a pure mind in this human world. Just as dream objects arising from waking impressions are unclear, the Self appears unclear in the world of manes due to attachment to enjoying karmic fruits. Just as one's reflection is unclear in water the Self appears unclear in the world of Gandharvas. Similarly, in other realms too, the vision of the Self remains unclear, as known from scriptural authority.

The meaning is that true Self-knowledge cannot be properly attained in any world other than this human world. Only in Brahmaloka does it appear like one's shadow or the sun's light. Attaining Brahmaloka is not easy; it can only be achieved through exceptionally meritorious deeds and indirect knowledge. Otherwise, it's not possible. The implication is that one should strive to attain Self-knowledge in this human world itself, while one has a human body.

7. Significance of Self-Knowledge (ātmajñānam)

eko vaśī sarvabhūtāntarātmā ekaṃ rūpaṃ bahudhā yaḥ karoti |
tamātmasthaṃ ye'nupaśyanti dhīrāsteṣāṃ sukhaṃ śāśvataṃ netareṣām |
(Katha Upanishad 2.2.12)

vedantacorpus.org

“*Eternal happiness belongs to the intelligent – not to others – who realize in their hearts Him who is one, the controller and the indwelling Self of all beings, and who makes the one form manifold*.”

The one who, though alone, is the master of all, who exists as the inner Self of all living beings, and who appears as the entire universe—such a one, who sees his true Self as the Atman in his own heart, attains eternal, sorrow-free, everlasting happiness and Supreme bliss. The Kaṭhopaniṣad proclaims that those who do not see their true Self will definitely not attain happiness or peace.

iha cedavedīdatha satyamasti na cedihāvedīnmahatī vinaṣṭiḥ ।
bhūteṣu bhūteṣu vicitya dhīrāḥ pretyāsmāllokādamṛtā bhavanti ॥ (Kena Upanishad 2.5)
“*Here (in this life) if one has realised, then there is accomplishment. Here if one has not realised, then there is utter ruin. Having realised Brahman in all beings, and having withdrawn from this world, the wise become immortal*.”

One who realizes it in this very life attains Supreme bliss. For one who does not realize it in this life, there is great loss - they cannot escape the terrible cycle of birth, death, old age and disease (janmamṛtyujarāvyādhi). The brave one who realizes the one Supreme Self that exists in all beings, in the entire universe of moving and non-moving things, becomes liberated from birth and death and attains immortality. That is, they become the Supreme Self that is never born again, as proclaimed by the Kena Upanishad.

jñānaṃ labdhvā parāṃ śāntimacireṇādhigacchati |
(Bhagavad Gita 4.39 b)
“*Having gained knowledge, one immediately attains limitless peace.*”

vedantacorpus.org

As soon as knowledge is gained, one attains the highest everlasting peace of liberation, which is free from even a trace of sorrow. Just as darkness instantly vanishes when a lamp is lit, similarly all sorrows vanish and eternal happiness is attained the moment knowledge dawns. Unlike other pleasures, this happiness does not end.

Doubt: There are many obstacles on the noble path, especially on the path of knowledge. Even deities create obstacles. How can one who has attained firm knowledge of the Self through the guru's teachings by means of contemplation and reflection be reborn or attain any other state without liberation?

Resolution: They definitely will not be reborn, because Self-Knowledge itself removes all obstacles and impediments. The only obstacle to liberation is ignorance (ajñānam) - there is no other impediment (pratibandha). Because liberation is eternal and is the very nature of everyone's Self. Let us see what the scriptures say on this matter:

sa yo ha vai tatparamaṃ brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati nāsyābrahmavitkule bhavati । tarati śokaṃ tarati pāpmānaṃ guhāgranthibhyo vimukto'mṛto bhavati ॥
(Mundaka Upanishad 3.2.9)
“*Anyone who knows that supreme Brahman becomes Brahman indeed. In his line is not born anyone who does not know Brahman. He overcomes grief, and rises above aberrations; and becoming freed from the knots of the heart, he attains immortality.*”

Whoever in this world realizes the Supreme, most excellent nature of the Self as it truly is - meaning, whoever directly intuits "**I am indeed the Supreme Self**" - they become the very Supreme Self. They do not attain any other state or remain separate. Even the gods cannot create obstacles to their liberation, for they become the very Self of the gods. Therefore,

vedantacorpus.org

those who intuit the true nature of the Supreme Self become that Supreme Self.

All who take refuge in such realized beings become wise and liberated. They are freed from all sorrows. Even while living, they are freed from all sorrows caused by separation due to desires. They are freed from the merits and demerits arising from dharma and adharma. They are liberated from the chains of ignorance.

"*He whose mind has been steadied even for a moment by Brahmavicāra has bathed in the waters of all holy rivers; he has gifted (i.e., has obtained merit of the dāna of) the entire world; he has performed thousands of sacrifices; all his gods have been duly worshipped; his ancestors have been lifted from the slough of saṃsāra; he himself is deserving of worship by the three worlds*." (Viveka Chudamani Commentary by H.H. Sri Chandrasekara Bharati - English edition, p. 68)

kulaṃ pavitraṃ jananī kṛtārthā
vasundharā puṇyavatī ca tena
apāra samvit sukha sāgare asmin
līnam parabrahmaṇi yasya cetaḥ |
"*The family is purified, the mother is fulfilled,*
And the earth becomes meritorious because of him,
whose mind is absorbed in the Supreme Brahman,
That infinite ocean of consciousness and bliss."

As stated in Anubhavamrita:
"*All past sins are burnt*
In a moment's contemplation of Brahman
What more can be said about this!
His parents are blessed, his relatives and entire lineage purified
Wherever he resides becomes a holy place
The merit of donating gold equal to Mount Meru,
Giving away land up to the ocean's edge,
Countless gifts of maidens and cows,
The fruits of offering these to the gods

vedantacorpus.org

With utmost devotion will be attained by those who contemplate on the Self for half a moment.
In this world, the greatness of everything can be described. But the greatness of Self-knowledge cannot be described by anyone. Such immeasurable results are obtained through Self-knowledge (ātmajñānam).

8. How to attain Self-Knowledge?

ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyo maitreyī |
(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 2.4.5)
"*The Self, my dear Maitreyī, should be realised—should be heard of, reflected on and contemplated upon.*"

śravaṇaṃ tu guroḥ pūrvaṃ mananaṃ tadanantaram |
nididhyāsanamityetatpūrṇabodhasya kāraṇam ||
(Shuka-Rahasya Upanishad)
"*Listening to discourses on the Vedanta from the mouth of the Guru, as the first step, reflecting on them thereafter, and engaging in profound contemplation (on the goal to be attained), these are the causes that contribute to the attainment of the superabundant sentience of the Brahman.*"
(Sāmānya Vedānta Upanisad-s by Sri T R Srinivasa Ayyangar)

One should intuit the nature of the Self through listening (śravaṇam), reflection (mananam), and contemplation (nididhyāsanam) as taught by a true guru.

[* Sravana (study of sacred revelation), Manana, (reflective thinking) and Nididhyasana (concentrated contemplation), are **all means for realizing Atman**. Highly developed souls, however, who can immediately grasp the true meaning of the Vedic teaching, do not stand in need of any additional effort –
Swāmiji, Sri Sri Satchidānandendra Saraswati. Salient Features of Śaṅkara's Vedānta, p. 82. See also Brahmasūtra Bhāṣyam 4.1.2)]

vedantacorpus.org

9. What is listening (śravaṇam)?

itthaṃ vākyaistadarthānusandhānaṃ śravaṇaṃ bhavet |
Panchadashi 1.53a
“*Finding out the real meanings of a sacred text is designated "Enquiry" (Sravana)*”
(Panchadasi of Vidyaranya. M. Srinivasa Rau and K.A. Krishnaswamy Aiyar)

Listening means controlling all senses, possessing qualities like self-control and sense-restraint, and attentively hearing with a focused mind (ekāgracitta) the teachings about the Self as expounded by a true guru.

10. What is reflection (mananam)?

yuktyā sambhāvitatvānusandhānaṃ mananantu tat |
Panchadashi 1.53b
“*Pondering over what is heard and subjecting it to the process of reasoning is known as "reflection" (Manana)*”
(Panchadasi of Vidyaranya. M. Srinivasa Rau and K.A. Krishnaswamy Aiyar)

Reflection means contemplating what has been heard, bringing it to one's own experience through reasoning, and thinking only about the nature of the Self, leaving aside the non-Self (anātma).

11. What is contemplation (nididhyāsanam)?

tābhyāṃ nirvicikitse'rthe cetasaḥsthāpitasya yat |
ekatānatvametaddhi nididhyāsanamucyate ||
Panchadashi 1.54
“*When by these (enquiry and reflection) the mind is free from all doubts, becomes firmly fixed, and comes to dwell continuously*

vedantacorpus.org

on Atma, it is said to be "unbroken contemplation" (Nididhyasana)"
(Panchadasi of Vidyaranya. M. Srinivasa Rau and K.A. Krishnaswamy Aiyar)

Nididhyāsanam is the continuous establishment of the mind in the nature of the Self, which has been understood deprived of doubt from the true Guru through listening (śravaṇam) and reflection (mananam). It is through this Nididhyasana that Self-realization occurs.

[* Nididhyasana, spiritual concentration or intense contemplation is a means of Self Knowledge and is meant for corroborating the teaching grasped by sravana and manana. Qualified aspirants who have not intuited the Self either by sravana alone or by a repeated practice of sravana and manana have an alternative in nididhyasana - Nididhyasana, although involves repetition, is not required after attaining Self knowledge. K.S. Ramanatha Sharma. Dakṣiṇa Bhārata-Śāṅkara Vedānta VidvadGoṣṭhi, p.65 & p.66]

12. The necessity of a true Guru

tadvijñānārthaṃ sa gurumevābhigacchetsamitpāṇiḥ śrotriyaṃ brahmaniṣṭham |
(Mundaka Upanishad 1.2.12b)
"*For knowing that Reality he should go, with sacrificial faggots in hand, only to a teacher versed in the Vedas and absorbed in Brahman.*"

The Shruti (scripture) states that even if one has not studied all the Vedas and Shastras, one should approach a true Guru with devotion, faith (śraddhābhakti), and equipped with qualities like detachment and self-control, for the purpose of Self-realization. Without surrendering to a Guru, no matter how much one studies the Vedas and Shastras (vedaśāstra) Supreme peace cannot be attained, and Self-realization cannot occur.

vedantacorpus.org

"*If it is possible to be definite by reading books, what is the necessity of any Guru?*" (Dasabodha 12.6.30), asks Samartha Ramdas. Even sage Narada, who had memorized the four Vedas, eighteen Puranas, and Shastras, could not attain Supreme peace until he sought refuge in a true Guru.

Without a a true Guru, Supreme peace cannot be attained. For the realization (intuition) of Brahman, a Guru who is established in Brahman is absolutely necessary. This is because even in worldly matters, we need to rely on those with experience in a particular field. If this is the case for ordinary subjects perceivable by the senses, then for the knowledge of the Self, which is beyond the grasp of the mind and intellect, complete peace (pūrṇa-śānti) can never be attained from those who have not experienced it.

The Shrutis also emphasize the importance of a true Guru.

13. Who is a true Guru?

tadvijñānārthaṃ sa gurumevābhigacchetsamitpāṇiḥ śrotriyaṃ brahmaniṣṭham |
(Mundaka Upanishad 1.2.12b)
"*For knowing that Reality he should go, with sacrificial faggots in hand, only to a teacher versed in the Vedas and absorbed in Brahman.*"

A true guru is one who has assimilated the essence of the scriptures and has the ability to lead a disciple to self-realization through his teachings and grace. The true guru has renounced all worldly actions and is constantly established in Brahman, endowed with devotion, knowledge, and dispassion. The Vedas instruct that spiritual seekers (mumukṣus) should take refuge in such a guru.

Those who are mostly engaged in worldly or household duties and only occasionally contemplate on Brahman are not true

vedantacorpus.org

gurus. This is because one cannot attain firm establishment in Brahman through them. Those who are established in Brahman but lack the ability to bestow grace on others are worthy of respect but cannot be true gurus. Although they may be liberated, they lack the additional qualification to reveal the nature of the Self to others.

Mere scholars (kevala śrotriya) who have studied the Vedas and Vedānta but lack self-realization (ātmānubhava) are also not true gurus. Just as one cannot give what one doesn't possess, how can one who lacks inner peace give it to others? **Therefore, only one who possesses self-realization (ātmānubhava) and the ability to properly instruct others and remove their doubts can be a true guru**. "*Know him to be the true guru who reveals to you your true nature*."

"*One who teaches the knowledge of Brahman, dissipates the darkness of ignorance and unites the jīva and Shiva. One who again unifies the jīva and Shiva, who are estranged from each other by conceptual duality, by making one the devotee and the God is the real guru.*
People have fallen into the net of Maya, and have suffered much sorrow in family life. One who liberates such persons should be known as true Guru (Sadguru)."
(Dasabodha 5.2.9-10, 5.2.12)

One who imparts the knowledge of Brahman and removes the darkness of ignorance, who frees the beings trapped in the great flood of Maya and unable to find a way out of their suffering, who removes the sense of duality between "I am the jīva" and "You are God", and brings the experience that "*All this is the Supreme Self*" (vāsudevaḥ sarvamiti) as stated in the Bhagavad Gita (7-19), *that the Self is the knower of all fields* (kṣetrajñaṃ cāpi māṃ viddhi sarvakṣetreṣu bhārata) as mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita (13-2), That one is the foundation of everything, all-knowing, without birth and death, beyond conceptualization (nirvikalpa), formless (nirākāra), actionless (niṣkriya), and of the nature of Supreme bliss

vedantacorpus.org

(paramānandasvarūpam) – One who brings this realization is to be known as the true Guru (Sadguru), says Samartha Ramdas Swami. He further states in his Manache Shloka:

"*The wise and discerning devotee, full of dispassion, Self-controlled, forgiving, in communion divine, filled with compassion, mighty of will, vigilant, learned, and adept in daily deeds, such a sage's company keep, to imbue the mind with divinity indeed*"
(Manache Shloka by Samartha Ramdas, 183)

Such a one is a true devotee: Not like an atheist who says everything is futile and there's no need for worship, not one who abandons japa and meditation claiming "I am Brahman", nor one who preaches the same to others. But one who follows proper conduct, contemplation, ethics, justice, righteousness, and self-directed duties, who practices both internal and external worship, who sees the Supreme Self everywhere and is thus a superior devotee; such a one is truly wise.

One who realizes that they are nothing but pure consciousness (śuddhacaitanyasvarūpa), the witness (sākṣi) of the three states, illuminating everything, and that there is nothing separate from oneself; one who sees all living beings, both moving and non-moving, as one's own Self.

A person of discrimination (vivekī): One who, in any situation that disturbs the mind, remains discerning between the real and unreal without giving in to disturbances;

A detached person (virāgi): One who has no attachment, even the slightest, to sensory pleasures of sound, touch, etc., and does not desire even the union with the three worlds if offered; Compassionate (kṛpālū): One with an extremely tender heart, who constantly strives in various ways for the upliftment of those who seek refuge in them, those suffering from worldly afflictions, and who has compassion for all living beings;

vedantacorpus.org

One with a conquered mind (manōjaya): Always absorbed in contemplation of one's true nature (svasvarūpānusandhāna), constantly established in one's real self;

Forgiving (kṣamāvaṃta): One who graciously pardons the offenses of others with a generous mind;

A yogī: One devoted to the path of knowledge (jñānayoga);

A master (prabhu): One capable of protecting devoted followers;

Vigilant (dakṣa): Adept in controlling the body, senses, mind, and intellect, in practicing spiritual disciplines, in guiding others to do so, and in remaining established in one's true nature (svarūpa-niṣṭha);

Learned (vyutpanna): One who understands the meaning of scriptures;

Wise (cāturya jāṇe): One who knows how to act appropriately with different people in different situations, who can grasp what is worthy in others' words without stubbornly clinging to one's own views, and who knows how to guide others towards self-realization and detachment;

It is only through such a qualified person that true peace is attained, self-realization is achieved, all negative qualities and attachment to sense objects are eliminated. Such a person should be recognized as a true guru.

According to the scriptures, "*Traditional teacher who himself has realized Brahman*" (ācāryāttattvadarśinaḥ, Panchadashi 1.32) and "*the wise who have the vision of the truth* " (jñāninastattvadarśinaḥ, Bhagavad Gita 4.34), one should approach only those wise ones who have correctly understood the nature of the Self and (therefore) possess Self-realization (ātmānubhava). This is because not all who claim to be

vedantacorpus.org

knowers or scholars truly have Self-realization or direct experience of the Self.

As the Lord himself says: "(*realizing) that Vasudeva is the all: he is the noble souled (mahātmā), very hard to find*" (vāsudevaḥ sarvamiti sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ, Bhagavad Gita 7.19). Those great beings who have the experiential knowledge (anubhavajñānam) that everything is the Supreme Self are very few. Only from such realized beings can one gain correct knowledge, not from others.

14. Who is qualified for Self-Knowledge?

parīkṣya lokānkarmacitānbrāhmaṇo nirvedamāyānnāstyakṛtaḥ kṛtena । (Mundaka Upanishad 1.2.12a)

After examining the worlds attained through karma, a Brahmana should become dispassionate, by becoming aware of this fact: There exists nothing in this world which is not the effect of karma. Then what is the use of karma?

Even after performing various karmas prescribed in the scriptures with great effort to fulfill many desires, the pleasures and enjoyments obtained in this world or the next are not permanent.

As the Lord says: "(*All) worlds including the world of Brahma are subject to returning again, O Arjuna*" (ā brahmabhuvanāllokāḥ punarāvartino'rjuna, Bhagavad Gita 8.16). One must reflect on the defects in all types of enjoyments using discrimination (viveka). This is because in acquiring objects of enjoyment, protecting them, losing them, or leaving them behind when one dies, there is only suffering.

ye hi saṃsparśajā bhogā duḥkhayonaya eva te ।

ādyantavantaḥ kaunteya na teṣu ramate budhaḥ ॥

(Bhagavad Gita 5.22)

vedantacorpus.org

“*Whatever pleasures are contact-born, they are only sources of pain. They have a beginning and an end, O Kaunteya (Arjuna), and no wise man delights in them.*”

All enjoyments arising from contact between senses and sense-objects are causes of sorrow. This is because all these arise from ignorance (avidyā). Therefore, they are the root cause of the three types of suffering: sorrow relating to oneself (ādhyātmika), divine (ādhidaivika), and physical (ādhibhautika). There is not even a trace of happiness in worldly existence (saṃsāra); it only appears as if there is happiness. This is merely an illusion. Understanding this, one should withdraw the senses from their objects.

ādau ca madhye ca tathaiva cāntato . bhavaṃ viditvā bhayaśokakāraṇam |
(Adhyatma Ramayana 7.5.55a)
"*Knowing the course of worldly life to be the cause of fear and sorrow in the beginning, middle and end*”

"*This fleeting and unhappy world"* (anityamasukhaṃ lokamimaṃ, Bhagavad Gita 9.33), " *the abode of pain, impermanent*" (duḥkhālayamaśāśvatam, Bhagavad Gita 8.15).

Moreover, these have a beginning and an end. Sense pleasures do not exist before they are experienced and disappear after being enjoyed. Like the pleasures in a dream, they appear briefly in the middle and then vanish. Enjoyments do not last forever; they are impermanent.

Therefore, a discriminating person who seeks the ultimate truth, an intelligent one who desires to attain the bliss of Brahman, and a wise one who wants to experience eternal happiness untouched by sorrow, does not indulge in or become attached to sense enjoyments. They stay away from these.
Only a foolish person with animal-like intellect, who does not understand their true well-being and lacks discrimination, loves

vedantacorpus.org

and desires objects that are equivalent to poison, and ultimately gives up their life for them.

One should not perform actions prohibited by the scriptures, meaning malicious deeds that are forbidden. These include immoral conduct, injustice, treachery, deception, fraud, violence towards others, adultery, and so on. Engaging in such evil deeds leads to various sufferings in this world, such as humiliation, difficulties, and diseases, and results in experiencing terrible hell in the next world. Additionally, one may be born as ghosts, spirits, demons, or animals like dogs, foxes, pigs, and worms.

One may have to be born as insects and experience intense suffering. Therefore, one should stay away from evil actions, understanding the consequences of such actions through personal reflection (svataḥ vicāra), teachings of the guru and scriptures, and by observing those who are currently suffering due to their past misdeeds. One should not even contemplate on such (malicious) actions. This is because, like a small seed growing into a large tree, one action leads to another, creating a chain of causes and effects. This concept is elaborated in the Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, from verse 62 onwards (BG. 2.62-2.63). All these lead to thousands of misfortunes including mockery, insult, sorrow, distress, poverty, disease, and ultimately loss of life.

All worldly objects are insubstantial. They are mere illusions (māyāmātra), like a mirage, imaginary like a celestial city, like a magician's trick, like a movie, like a dream, like a reflection in a mirror, like bubbles in water that appear and disappear. They are momentary, delusional, caused by ignorance, bound by dharma and adharma, merit and sin, the root of birth and death, and the cause of various sufferings.

One should recognize the flaws in all worldly objects through discrimination, experience, and reasoning (viveka, anubhava, yukti). One should develop mental detachment towards all

vedantacorpus.org

enjoyments in this world and the next. As stated in the Ashtavakragita:

muktimicchasi cettāta viṣayān viṣavattyaja |
kṣamārjavadayātoṣasatyaṃ pīyūṣavad bhaja ||
(Ashtavakragita 1.2)
"*If you aspire after liberation, my child, shun the objects of the senses as poison and seek forgiveness, sincerity, kindness, contentment and truth' as nectar.*" One should view the entire world with aversion, just as one views vomit or excrement. Such a person becomes a true disciple. Such a person becomes qualified to attain the bliss of Brahman. Such a person becomes capable of attaining the kingdom of liberation - this is what the Mundaka Upanishad proclaims.

15. Characteristics of a Jijñāsu

How should someone be who approaches a true guru? And for whom will the knowledge taught by that guru be properly experienced exactly as it is? The shruti speaks thus on this matter:

tasmai sa vidvānupasannāya samyakpraśāntacittāya śamānvitāya । yenākṣaraṃ puruṣaṃ veda satyaṃ provāca tāṃ tattvato brahmavidyām ॥ (Mundaka Upanishad 1.2.13)
"*To him who has approached duly, whose heart is calm and whose outer organs are under control, that man of enlightenment should adequately impart that knowledge of Brahman by which one realizes the true and imperishable Purusha.*"

'Praśāntacittāya' means one with a pure inner mind (śuddhāntaḥkaraṇa).

'Uparatadarpādidoṣāya' means one who has removed defects like pride (abhimāna), arrogance, lack of discrimination

vedantacorpus.org

(aviveka), attachment to sense objects, fallacious reasoning (kutarka), wrong notions, and stubbornness. Only one with such an inner mind is said to have a pure inner mind.

‘Śamānvitāya’ means one endowed with the fourfold qualities (sādhanacatuṣṭaya) of self-control, sense-control, etc.

‘Bāhyendriyoparameṇa ca yuktāya’ means one should not let the senses roam freely outwards. One should control all the senses and keep them under one's command through discrimination. There should not be even a trace of bodily attachment (dehavāsana), attachment to scriptures (śāstravāsana), or worldly attachments (lokavāsana). "*Non-attachment, absence of affection for son, wife, home and the like*” (asaktiranabhiṣvaṅgaḥ putradāragṛhādiṣu, Bhagavad Gita 13.9)

One should give up desire for wife, children and wealth. There should be no attachment to wife, children, etc. There should be humility, reverence and devotion towards noble people. One should have faith (śraddhā), respect and trust in their words.

‘Sarvato viraktāyetyetat’ means one should see the defects in all sense objects through discrimination and reasoning. One should not be attached to them. One should have a mind completely detached. Only such a person of dispassion is qualified for knowledge.

If one endowed with such qualifications approaches a true guru, then the supreme, imperishable, invisible Truth that resides within this very body, which the guru teaches, will be properly intuited.

The true knowledge of the Supreme Self, which is Brahmavidya, is experienced exactly as it truly is (tattvataḥ). This means that one should become a worthy disciple by acquiring the necessary qualifications and approach a true guru. Then that guru will help the disciple cross the ocean of

vedantacorpus.org

ignorance and make them embodiments of Supreme Bliss. Without these qualifications, one may misunderstand the teachings and experience misery instead. Instead of eternal happiness, one may attain eternal sorrow.

16. Who is a true disciple?

Just as a patient takes the medicine prescribed by the doctor and follows the recommended diet to be cured of disease and attain health, similarly, the seeker of liberation who is afflicted by the disease of worldly existence should follow the instructions of the true guru, who is the doctor for all worlds. Only by doing so can one be freed from the disease of worldly existence and attain the health of Supreme Bliss.

"*The main quality of a good disciple is that he must have full trust in the teaching given by the Sadguru. He must surrender himself totally to the Sadguru. Then he is called a good disciple.*"
(Dasabodha 5.3.19)

One who has these qualities is called a true disciple. The rest are disciples in name only.

"*The chief sign of true spiritual life is to obey the orders of Sadguru (True Guru). If you disobey, it is itself a contradiction to that life.*"
(Dasabodha 6.7.10)

"*One who holds in his heart the meaning of the teaching of Sadguru becomes worthy of freedom and he again and again listens and meditates on the teaching.*"
(Dasabodha 8.8.57)

The primary trait of a true disciple, or a seeker of Supreme bliss, is to follow the Guru's words literally. One should hold the Guru's teachings in their heart and repeatedly engage in

vedantacorpus.org

listening and contemplation with great devotion and enthusiasm, without weariness. Such a devoted disciple becomes worthy of attaining the kingdom of liberation.

If one doesn't listen to the Guru's instructions, doesn't practice as instructed, disobeys their commands, and acts according to their own mind, it leads to adverse results and misfortune. They naturally distance themselves from their true bliss and eternal happiness, meaning they cannot attain supreme peace.

"*Many are there who have turned away from the Sadguru and who have been drowned in the ocean of this life, where many aquatic animals of pains and pleasures bite them.*"
(Dasabodha 5.3.37)

If one loses faith in the Guru's words and abandons them, what happens is this: Many people have sunk back into the ocean of worldly existence by doing so. They get caught by the aquatic creatures of desire, anger, etc., in that ocean and experience terrible suffering. They go through cycles of birth and death, enduring great hardships.

"*Therefore, only he who has great faith should be considered a good disciple and the leader among those who deserve liberation.*"
(Dasabodha 5.3.38)

Therefore, in any circumstance, one who has unwavering and complete faith in the Guru and his words, deprived of doubt, is a true disciple. He becomes highly qualified for liberation (uttama-adhikāri).

Just as a mother scolds her children, it may appear harsh to the children. But no matter how much the mother scolds or hits, she has only their wellbeing in mind, without any malicious intent. Similarly, the Guru, to remove the disciple's faults, bad habits, worldly attachments, belief in the reality of the world, and body-identification, uses various methods including harsh words at

vedantacorpus.org

the right time. But there is no selfishness or ill-intent in this. The Guru's compassionate heart only wishes for the disciple to attain perfection, to give up all faults and attachments, and to experience Supreme Bliss always, just like the Guru. The Guru's words may initially cause some pain to the mind.

Like a doctor performing surgery to remove a large boil, it may be difficult to bear at first. But with some effort, if one endures that difficulty, relief and comfort follow. Similarly, if the spiritual seeker endures the Guru's words meant to remove faults with some discernment, having faith in the Guru's words and following his instructions, all sorrows will be removed and Supreme Bliss will be attained.

17. Practices towards Self-Knowledge

For the seeker (mumukṣu) who desires to attain Supreme bliss, one should practice the disciplines (sādhanas) as instructed by the true guru without fail. First, one should abandon the demonic qualities (Bhagavad Gita 16.4) and strive to acquire divine qualities (Bhagavad Gita 16.1), as well as virtues like humility (Bhagavad Gita 13.7) and the qualities of a true devotee (Bhagavad Gita 12.13). One should perform physical, verbal, and mental austerities (Bhagavad Gita 17.14,17.15,17.16). One should serve the true guru with body, mind, and wealth. The Lord has described the means to attain Self-knowledge in this way:

tadviddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā |
upadekṣyanti te jñānaṃ jñāninastattvadarśinaḥ ||
(Bhagavad Gita 4.34)
"*Know this: by long prostration, by enquiry, by service, those men of wisdom who have realized the truth will teach thee wisdom (knowledge).*"

One should approach the realized sages who have experienced the Self (ātmānubhava) first abandoning all pride of lineage,

vedantacorpus.org

wealth, education, authority, and so on. One should prostrate fully at their feet. Then, with utmost devotion and humility, one should inquire: "How did I become bound? How can I attain liberation? What is Knowledge? What is ignorance?" According to one's capacity, one should serve the true guru, the bestower of knowledge, with body, mind, and wealth in a way that pleases him. There should be no deception in this.

This is because if one wishes to enter the temple of Knowledge, service to the true guru is like the doorway to that temple. Just as it is impossible to enter the temple without passing through the door, similarly, only when one serves the true guru wholeheartedly. all obstacles to Knowledge get removed, enabling one to enter the temple of Supreme bliss.

Once Supreme bliss is attained by the grace of the true guru, unlike sensory pleasures which fade away, this bliss of Brahman will never diminish.

18. Four types of Guru service (gurusevā)

There are four types of service to the Guru:
Among them are sthāna-sevā (place or temple), aṃga-sevā (body or physical), bhāva-sevā (mental), and ātma-sevā (self) service, which is considered the highest.

1. sthāna-sevā

“*For the temple, we should provide kitchen room, dining rooms, storehouses, pantries, restrooms, and rooms for people to sleep in, which should be large enough*.”
(Dasabodha 4.7.14)

“*We should provide special places to keep scents and aromatic articles, as well as eatables and fruits, and for keeping various juices properly.*”
(Dasabodha 4.7.15)

vedantacorpus.org

“*We should be tolerant and ever ready to do any service for any purpose and should be so alert that we will not forget what is to be done*.”
(Dasabodha 4.7.17)

“*Sprinkling courtyards and approaching roads with water, keeping water pots filled with water, and washing clothes should be done*.”
(Dasabodha 4.7.24)

For rituals, a place to sit, kitchen, dining room, storage room, bedroom - in all ways making the ashram comfortable for the Guru's residence. Collecting various fragrant substances and food items there. Ensuring nothing is lacking in any way for the Guru's service.

Performing all the lowest forms of service. Samartha Ramdas Swami says that sweeping, cleaning, and doing other necessary work in the ashram where the Guru resides, either personally or by getting it done, is all considered as sthāna-sevā.

2. aṃga-sevā

“*We should make available water for washing (his) feet, baths, ritualistic ceremonies, paste, coloured rice, clothes, ornaments, seats, water; various flowers, incense, lamps, and food to be offered.*”
(Dasabodha 4.7.21)

“*Best places for sleeping, keeping cool water, betel-leaf, programmes of melodious music, all these should be arranged for*.”
(Dasabodha 4.7.22)

Bathing the Guru, washing and folding his clothes, bringing necessary items for his use, worshipping his feet, offering salutations, preparing and serving food for his meals and alms,

vedantacorpus.org

making his bed, serving his feet, etc. - all these are considered aṃga-sevā.

3. bhāva-sevā

The Guru is verily the mother, father, family, and God without doubt.

Knowing the Guru as mother, father, relative,
And as the direct manifestation of Brahman,
This realization is considered as bhāva-sevā.

Understanding the Guru's unspoken intentions and acting accordingly. Behaving in a way that pleases the Guru's mind. Having unwavering faith in the Guru. Devotion and single-minded focus on the Guru. Never harboring any negative thoughts about the Guru, either from one's own mind or through association with wicked people, in any circumstance, '*who has supreme devotion to God, and as much devotion to his Guru or preceptor as to God'* (yasya deve parā bhaktiḥ yathā deve tathā gurau | SvUp 6.23).

There is no one greater than the Guru in this world. One should firmly believe that the Guru is the very embodiment of Truth. This is called bhāva-sevā.

4. ātma-sevā

Offering to the Guru what he desires,
Even before the Guru asks for it;
Pleasing the Guru in this way is called service to the Self.
One who serves the blessed Guru in this manner on earth,
And constantly listens (to his teachings),
Is considered a true disciple.

Those who perform these four types of service to the Guru will have all obstacles to (true) knowledge removed. Through

vedantacorpus.org

purification of the mind (cittaśuddhi), pure knowledge will be attained. Evidence for this is given in the Panchadasi:

namaḥ śrīśaṅkarānandagurupādāmbujanmane |
savilāsamahāmohagrāhagrāsaikakarmaṇe ||
(Panchadasi 1.1)
"*I bow down at the lotus-like feet of my master Śrī Śaṅkarānanda whose sole function consists in devouring the crocodile of primal ignorance, with its effect (the apparent universe).*"

The feet of the Sadguru are such that they make one eternally blissful. "Shankarananda eva guru" means the Guru is the very form of Supreme bliss - the Self. That is why it is said "*The Guru is directly the Supreme Brahman*" (guruḥ sākṣāt paraṃ brahma).

This Māyā is like a great crocodile. Just as a crocodile pulls those in the river towards itself and kills them, the crocodile of ignorance in the ocean of samsara captures these beings and causes repeated births and deaths. Just as those who are seated can easily cross a river without fear of crocodiles, those who take refuge in the boat of the true Guru's feet can easily cross the ocean of worldly existence without any difficulty.

Why are they called lotus feet? Just as bees extract honey from lotuses and enjoy it, good disciples, like bees, take refuge in the lotus-like feet of the true Guru and enjoy the honey of Brahmananda (bliss of Brahman). Hence, they are called lotus feet.

tatpādāmburuhadvandvasevānirmalacetasām |
sukhabodhāya tattvasya viveko'yaṃ vidhīyate ||
(Panchadasi 1.2)
"*This work teaches how to discriminate truth (regarding Brahman) for the easy comprehension of those whose hearts are purified by a course of worship of the lotus like feet of Śrī Śaṅkarānanda*"

vedantacorpus.org

Only for those whose minds have been purified by such service to the Guru's feet does knowledge become easily and correctly understood. Among the means of attaining knowledge (as mentioned in Bhagavad Gita 13-8), worship of the teacher is supreme. Service to the true Guru who imparts knowledge is the greatest means, surpassing all other practices. Even without performing any other spiritual practices, service to the true Guru alone can bestow qualifications superior to those obtained from all other practices combined.

19. The Main Duty of the Seeker of Liberation

yacchedvāṅmanasī prājñastadyacchejjñāna ātmani |
jñānamātmani mahati niyacchettadyacchecchānta ātmani ||
(Katha Upanishad 1.3.13)
"*Let the wise man merge speech in his mind, merge that (mind) into the intelligent self and the intelligent self into the Mahat. (Let him then) merge the Mahat into the peaceful Self.*"

The discriminating seeker (vivekī) should merge all senses, starting with speech, into the mind. That mind should be merged into the intellect, which is perceivable. The intellect should be merged into its source, Mahat (ahaṃkāra). Finally, Mahat should be merged into the attributeless, actionless, all-pervading, witness of all intellects, supreme, pure, and peaceful Self. It is important to bring oneself under control, through a discriminating mind, all the senses that are aimlessly wandering, chasing after transient, imaginary sense objects that appear due to mere illusion. If left unchecked, each living being loses its life by becoming a slave to each sense.

śabdādibhiḥ pañcabhireva pañca
pañcatvamāpuḥ svaguṇena baddhāḥ |
kuraṅgamātaṅgapataṅgamīna
bhṛṅgā naraḥ pañcabhirañcitaḥ kim ||
(Vivekachudamani 78)
"*The deer, the elephant, the moth, the fish and the*

vedantacorpus.org

blackbee meet with death, each by one of these five senses. What then needs to be said of man in whom all the five are active?

Deer (and snakes) that were roaming freely lost their lives, becoming enchanted by sweet sounds. The elephant, which was wandering in the forest at will, became subject to the mahout and had to endure various terrible hardships due to being attracted to the touch of a female elephant. The moth lost its life, mesmerized by the form of fire. The fish, giving in to the taste of the tongue, got caught in the fisherman's net and lost its life. The bee, intoxicated by fragrance, sits in a lotus. As evening comes, the lotus closes. Infatuated, it remains inside, lost in the fragrance. An elephant comes, plucks the lotus, throws it on the ground, and tramples it with its foot. Thus, the bee loses its life for the sake of fragrance.

This is how each living being loses its life - by becoming enslaved to one sense organ and following it. Now, if a human being becomes a slave to all five sense organs, listening to their demands and following them, what will become of him? One must reflect on this carefully. Therefore, after considering the harm caused by these, one should bring all the senses under control using one’s discriminative intellect (viveka-yukta-buddhi).

vyavasāyātmikā buddhirekeha kurunandana |
bahuśākhā hyanantāśca buddhayo'vyavasāyinām ||
(Bhagavad Gita 2.41)
“*In this (path of Yoga), O Kurunandana, the determinante will is directed towards one ideal, whereas the indeterminate will branches iri diverse directions endlessly.*”

Just as a battery gradually loses its electrical charge through use and eventually becomes useless, similarly, by contemplating on the many ever-changing objects of the world which have numerous branches and sub-branches, the mind loses its mental power (mananaśakti, power of reflection) and

vedantacorpus.org

becomes weak. However, by contemplating on the Atman (Self), which is unchanging, one, motionless, all-pervading, and one's own true nature, divyaśakti is generated in the mind. What is the use of this? One can experience pure, Supreme bliss without desiring any external objects of enjoyment.

Moreover, as stated in the Bhagavad Gita (6.22): " yasminsthito na duḥkhena guruṇāpi vicālyate | " *when therein established, he is not moved even by a great pain*".

By constantly contemplating on the Self (ātmacintā) and being established in it, one gains the ability to remain courageous and undaunted even when faced with profound sorrow or terrible circumstances. Furthermore, it becomes possible to experience eternal happiness uninterruptedly. Therefore, the seeker of liberation (mumukṣu) should always practice Self-contemplation (ātmānusandhāna), remain established in the nature of the Self, dissolve the mind and intellect in it, attain supreme bliss, and experience eternal happiness.

One who desires liberation; who wants to be free from all sorrows; who wishes to escape the blows of attachment and aversion, desire and anger; who longs to attain freedom from birth and death and achieve liberation (mokṣa). Such a discriminating, intelligent, courageous, spiritual aspirant, and wise person should primarily and constantly pursue this goal alone. They should not do anything else or get entangled in other matters. Let's see what the scriptures say on this: yasmindyauḥ pṛthivī cāntarikṣamotaṃ manaḥ saha prāṇaiśca sarvaiḥ । tamevaikaṃ jānatha ātmānamanyā vāco vimuñcathāmṛtasyaiṣa setuḥ ॥ (Mundaka Upanishad 2.2.5)
"*Know that Self alone that is one without a second, on which are strung heaven, the earth and the interspace, the mind and the vital forces together with all the other organs; and give up all other talks. This is the bridge leading to immortality.*"

vedantacorpus.org

O disciples, listen! That imperishable Supreme Brahman, in which all the worlds like heaven, earth, and the intermediate space exist; in which the mind and all the senses with the pranas are interwoven - know that One Self alone as the substratum, support and source of everything. Realize this non-dual Self that is your true nature and the essence of all beings. Abandon all other topics (talks) born of ignorance, delusion, and mere imagination (avidyārūpavāda, bhramarūpavāda, kevala kalpitavāda). Do not speak of anything but the Self. Do not listen to, look at, or strive for objects of enjoyment like a donkey laboring in vain. Do not become their slave or serve them. Completely renounce the attributes and actions of the non-Self (anātma). This is the bridge to immortality (amṛtattva), according to śruti.

Just as a bridge is absolutely necessary and helpful for those who wish to cross a big river, similarly, this knowledge is the bridge for crossing the ocean of worldly existence. For those who desire immortality, these thoughts are like a bridge. To cross this great ocean of samsara, the only bridge is Self-knowledge (ātmajñānam); there is no other path. "*Having known that alone, one goes beyond death (ignorance). There is no other means for reaching*." (tameva viditvātimṛtyumeti nānyaḥ panthā vidyate'yanāya | Svetasvatara Upanishad 3.8).

Only by realizing the nature of the Self can one be freed from birth and death. (Even if one knows or does anything else, liberation will not occur.) The Vedas proclaim that apart from this, there is no other way to attain liberation (mokṣa).

20. How does qualification (adhikāritvam) arise?

To attain Self-knowledge, one must have purity of mind (cittaśuddhi). The sign of mental purity is lack of attachment to all sense objects, and a strong desire to attain knowledge viz. liberation, eternal happiness, and realization of the Supreme Self (paramātmaprāpti). Only such a person becomes eligible to

vedantacorpus.org

attain knowledge. In this Kali Yuga, the best and easiest means to gain proper eligibility is: "*Devotion is renowned as the means for liberation from worldly bondage. There is no other means whatsoever.*"

Devotion to the Supreme Self is the best and most renowned means for liberation from the bondage of worldly existence. The Mother of the Universe, Goddess Parvati, has declared that there is no easier or superior means than devotion to the Guru and God.

21. What is devotion (bhakti)?

Love for the Supreme Self is called devotion (bhakti). Love for husband, wife, land, house, money, fame etc. is called attachment. They call it desire.

It distorts the mind and causes bondage and suffering. It is also the cause of birth and death. Love for sense objects (the non-Self) is the cause of all misfortunes. If this same love is directed towards the Supreme Self, the true Guru, those established in Brahman, great souls, and devotees of God, it is called devotion (bhakti).

This purifies the mind and makes it free from distortions. It leads to freedom from all types of suffering and (finally to) liberation. It causes release from birth and death. It is the means to attain eternal bliss and Supreme peace.

yā prītiravivekānāṃ viṣayeṣvanapāyinī |
tvāmanusmarataḥ sā me hṛdayānmāpasarpatu ||
(Vishnupurana 1.20.19)
"*May passion, as fixed as that which the worldly-minded feel for sensual pleasures, ever animate my heart, always devoted unto thee*." (Transl.: H. Wilson).

vedantacorpus.org

"O Supreme Self! May the same love that the ignorant and lustful have for worldly objects and sensual pleasures be directed towards You alone, who are pure Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. May that love never leave my heart as I remember You." Thus prayed Prahlada, the greatest devotee, to the Lord with single-minded devotion.

samāsaktaṃ yathā cittaṃ jantorviṣayagocare |
yadyevaṃ brahmaṇi nyastaṃ ko na mucyeta bandhanāt ||
(Bhavishya Purana 1.17.40)
"*The minds of the conditioned souls of this world are attached to the sense gratification, but if that attachment is transferred to the worship of Lord Brahma (Brahman), who would not be liberated from bondage? (*Transl.: Bhumipati Das, edited)
Just as the mind of ordinary beings is absorbed in sense objects, if it becomes similarly absorbed in Brahman, who would not be freed from bondage? In other words, if one develops the same intense love and attachment for the Supreme Self as people normally have for spouse, children and other worldly objects, they will surely be liberated from all bondage.

22. Devotion is an easy practice

For many people, it is difficult to begin with other spiritual practices (sādhanas). They require some qualifications (adhikāritvam). But devotion is not like that; it doesn't need any qualifications. There are no restrictions based on caste or class. Whether a child, youth, or elder, woman or man, strong or weak, sick or healthy – everyone can easily practice devotion. There are no constraints; sinners and the virtuous alike can become devotees of God.

23. Even sinners can become virtuous

api cetsudurācāro bhajate māmananyabhāk ।

sādhureva sa mantavyaḥ samyagvyavasito hi saḥ ॥

vedantacorpus.org

(Bhagavad Gita 9.30)
"*If one of even very evil life worships Me, resorting to none else, he must indeed be deemed righteous, for he is rightly resolved.*"

Even if one has committed the most terrible sins, if they worship the Supreme God with single-minded devotion and meditate on Him, they should be considered a saint (sādhu). This is because they have made the right decision. What is the benefit of having good intentions? When one cultivates good intentions internally, by its power and influence, externally they abandon their sinful ways and –

kṣipraṃ bhavati dharmātmā śaśvacchāntiṃ nigacchati ।
kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati ॥
(Bhagavad Gita 9.31)
"*Soon he becomes righteous and attains eternal peace; do thou, O son of Kunti, proclaim that My devotee never perishes.*"

Very soon, they develop an interest in righteousness and good conduct. They become virtuous and of good character. Through this, they attain eternal, everlasting peace and happiness that never fades. The mind becomes established in the Supreme Self. Listen, Arjuna! A devotee who fixes their mind on Me in this way will truly never fall or be destroyed. Have no doubt about this. Make a firm resolve that this is certain. The Lord Himself has greatly extolled the importance of devotion.

Tulsidas was such a lustful person! But by loving the Supreme Self, he became supremely pure. Valmiki was such a sinner! Through devotion to Rama, he became a great soul. Ajamila was such an immoral person! Even he attained liberation through remembrance of God's name. Therefore, devotion is a great means for liberation from the bondage of worldly existence. There is no better practice than this. Through devotion to God, all desired objects are attained, the bound become seekers of liberation, seekers become practitioners (sādhaka-s), practitioners become liberated, and the liberated

vedantacorpus.org

always experience bliss. The Supreme Self always protects His devotee.

Through devotion, all difficulties, all types of sorrows, and countless fears are removed. Just as a child who takes refuge in its mother easily reaches its destination without any danger or losing the way, similarly one who takes refuge in the Supreme Self and practices for liberation will certainly attain moksha easily without any danger or losing the way.

24. Everything is service to the Supreme Self

The Supreme Self exists in all living beings. Not only that, the Vedas and scriptures proclaim that everything is of the nature of the Supreme Self. Great souls (mahātma) teach the same. Therefore, one should see the Divine in everyone. When one sees the Supreme Self in all, then deceit, treachery, injustice, and violence all disappear. The mind becomes pure. Then naturally God's grace descends upon you.

Whatever is done for anyone should be considered as done for the Supreme Self. If one acts thinking "I am doing this for my wife, my husband, my children, my relatives" - that leads to sorrow and bondage. It becomes the cause of bondage. It becomes the cause of birth and death. What you do is not for the inert body made of bones, if it were for the inert body, if that's what you love, then you should do it for the corpse too. You should love that too. But no one loves a corpse. They fear it when they see it. So then, what you do or love, for whom is it? It is for the Supreme Self, the Consciousness that dwells in the inert body.

Therefore, do it for anyone - husband, wife, children, relatives, guests, etc. Love anyone, respect anyone, but do it with the understanding that you are doing it for the Supreme Self in this form. I am serving the Supreme Self; I am loving the Supreme Self - think like this. The Supreme Self is in everyone. Not just

vedantacorpus.org

that, consider everyone to be the very form of the Supreme Self.

No one brings anything with them when they come (birth). They don't take anything when they go (death). All this is given by the Supreme Self. All this belongs to Him, there is not even a trace of yours here. The Supreme Self is the master of the entire universe. You are His servant. If you claim others' property as your own, will they leave you alone? You will have to suffer various troubles from them. Similarly, if you claim all this, which is the property of the Supreme Self, as yours, will He leave you alone? For this very reason, He gives you various troubles. For this offense, one has to experience various sorrows.

Therefore, from now on, give up the vain pride of "my family, my home, my wealth." All this belongs to the Supreme Self. God is the owner of all this. I am His servant. God has given me this service. I am doing His service - understand this way, remember this again and again.

yatkaroṣi yadaśnāsi . yajjuhoṣi dadāsi yat ।

yattapasyasi kaunteya . tatkuruṣva madarpaṇam ॥

(Bhagavad Gita 9.27)

“*Whatever thou doest, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou sacrificest, whatever thou givest, in whatever austerity thou engagest, do it as an offering to Me.*”

The Lord Himself has said: "Whatever actions you perform daily for your livelihood, whatever you eat at various times to fill your stomach, whatever you donate to worthy recipients like Brahmins, whatever penance you perform through body, speech and mind - offer all of that to Me as a dedication to the Supreme Self.

Just as a servant offers all the work he has done to his master; you too should offer all your actions and activities as a dedication to the Supreme Self. This is because nothing here

vedantacorpus.org

truly belongs to you. Everything belongs to the Supreme Self alone. Even this body, which you consider as "I" and love so much, is not yours - you will have to leave it behind here in the end. This too belongs to the Supreme Self.

So, what here can you call your own? Reflect on this a little. When you contemplate thus, you will realize through experience that there is absolutely nothing here that you can call "mine".

Therefore, everything belongs to the Supreme Self; the Supreme Self exists in all beings. "I am His servant; I am only serving the Supreme Self" - cultivate this attitude again and again. See the Supreme Self in everyone and everything you encounter.

25. What is the fruit of serving the Supreme Self?

śubhāśubhaphalairevaṃ . mokṣyase karmabandhanaiḥ ।

saṃnyāsayogayuktātmā . vimukto māmupaiṣyasi ॥ 28 ॥

(Bhagavad Gita 9.28)

"*Thus shalt thou be liberated from the bonds of actions which are productive of good and evil results; equipped in mind with the Yoga of renunciation, and liberated, thou shalt come to Me.*"

Just as a dirty cloth becomes clean when washed with soap, similarly, when you perform all actions with the attitude that everything belongs to the Supreme Self and you are only serving Him, your mind which is polluted by desire, anger, attachment, aversion etc. becomes purified. You become free from the bondage of good and bad results, merit and sin.

You attain freedom from pleasures and pains, from birth and death. Realizing that everything belongs to the Supreme Self, seeing the Supreme Self in all beings, performing all actions as service to the Supreme Self, and offering everything to the Supreme Self - this too is a form of renunciation (saṃnyāsa).

vedantacorpus.org

Through this, you gain purity of mind (cittaśuddhi) and attain eternal bliss and everlasting peace. Thereafter, you merge with Me, as declared by the Supreme Self. If performing even ordinary tasks with the attitude of serving the Supreme Self yields such great results, the benefits of directly serving the Supreme Self, the true Guru, and great souls are immeasurable.

If one wishes to travel from Bangalore to Bombay independently on foot, there is danger from thieves on the way. In the forest, there is peril from wild animals like tigers, lions, pythons, and cobras. Crossing rivers, hills, and mountains on the path is difficult. One may or may not reach Bombay in the end. However, if one buys a railway ticket and boards the Poona train, food is provided at regular intervals. Finally, the train takes him to Poona station and drops him near the train to Bombay. Boarding that train with the same ticket will take him to Bombay.

Similarly, man needs to reach the Bombay of liberation. For this, if one independently practices yoga, etc. (yogādi-sādhana) or contemplates on Brahman (brahmavicāra), like the person traveling on foot, there is fear of thieves in the form of veiling (āvaraṇa) and projection (vikṣepa). Just as there is danger from wild animals in the great forest, in the dense forest of the illusory world (māyāprapañca), there is peril from beasts like worldly tendencies, scriptural obsessions, body-consciousness, ego, desire, and anger. Just as rivers, hills, and mountains obstruct one's path, the obstacles of past, present, and future hinder one's journey.

Like a person who sets out on foot may or may not reach Bombay, one may or may not attain liberation (direct intuition, aparokṣajñānam) even after performing all these spiritual practices. However, just as one who buys a railway ticket with the appropriate fare and boards the train to Pune, if one offers the wealth of discrimination and inquiry (vivekavicāra) , obtains the ticket of faith, and boards the train of devotion to the Supreme Self, Guru, and holy beings along with their service,

vedantacorpus.org

then just as the ticket takes the passenger to Pune station without fear or worry, providing food along the way, and finally drops them near the broad gauge train to Bombay, similarly, devotion (bhakti) to the Supreme Self removes all obstacles to liberation (ātmajñānam, aparokṣajñānam), providing spiritual nourishment of Self-inquiry of what is Self and Not-Self (ātmānātmaviveka), dispassion, and control of mind and senses (śamadamādi), and finally leads one to the state of intense desire for liberation (mumukṣutvam), dropping them at the feet of the Guru who grants liberation.

Just as boarding that train with the same ticket takes one to Bombay, surrendering to the Guru with singular devotion leads one to liberation by the power of that devotion. The essence is that through unwavering devotion to the Supreme Self, one can easily attain liberation without any difficulties. There are nine types of devotion, which we will briefly explain. These are the means (mokṣasādhana) for fulfilling the purpose of human birth and attaining liberation. By understanding and following these, a mortal human becomes immortal.

26. Nine types of devotion

śrīprahrāda uvāca
śravaṇaṃ kīrtanaṃ viṣṇoḥ smaraṇaṃ pādasevanam |
arcanaṃ vandanaṃ dāsyaṃ sakhyamātmanivedanam ||
iti puṃsārpitā viṣṇau bhaktiścen navalakṣaṇā |
kriyeta bhagavatyaddhā tan manye 'dhītamuttamam |
(Bhagavatapurana 7.5.23-24)
“*Prahlāda said: “There are nine forms of devotion to Lord Viṣṇu—(1) to hear the names, episodes etc. of Viṣṇu, (2) to sing of his name and glories, (3) to Remember him (his name), (4) to render service unto him, (5) to worship him, (6) to pay obeisance to him, (7) to dedicate all one’s actions to him, (8) to confide to him as a friend, (9) to offer one’s body and belongings to his service and care. I regard it as the highest*

vedantacorpus.org

type of learning, if one offers himself completely to the Lord and performs this nine-fold devotion." (Transl by G. V. Tagare)

There are nine types of devotion:
Listening (śravaṇa), chanting (kīrtana), remembering the name (nāmasmaraṇa) serving the feet (pādaseva), ritual worship (arcana), salutation (namaskāra), servitude (dāsya), friendship (sākhya), and self-surrender (ātmanivedana).

śrī-viṣṇoḥ śravaṇe parīkṣid abhavad vaiyāsakiḥ kīrtane |
prahlādaḥ smaraṇe tad-aṅghri-bhajane lakṣmīḥ pṛthuḥ pūjane ||
akrūras tv abhivandane kapi-patir dāsye'tha sakhye'rjunaḥ |
sarvasvātma-nivedane balir abhūt kṛṣṇāptir eṣāṃ parā ||
(Sri Chaitanya Charitanrita 22.136)
"*Parīkṣit Mahārāja attained salvation simply by hearing, and Śukadeva Gosvāmī attained salvation simply by chanting. Prahlāda Mahārāja attained salvation by remembering the Lord. The goddess of fortune, Lakṣmīdevī, attained perfection by worshiping the Lord's lotus feet. Pṛthu Mahārāja attained salvation by worshiping the Deity of the Lord and Akrūra attained perfection by offering prayers unto the Lord. Vajrāṅgajī [Hanumān] attained perfection by rendering service to Lord Rāmacandra, and Arjuna attained perfection simply by being Kṛṣṇa's friend. Bali Mahārāja attained perfection by dedicating everything to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa*."

1. Devotion through Listening (śravaṇa bhakti): Listening comes first, as one must hear before practicing. King Parīkṣit attained liberation by listening to the Bhagavata for seven days. Arjuna became liberated while living by listening to the Bhagavad Gita. Khatvanga attained liberation immediately upon hearing about the nature of the Self.

One should listen to: The divine play of the Supreme Self, His glorious attributes, stories of great devotees, realized souls and true gurus, and especially spiritual discourses.

vedantacorpus.org

The benefits of listening are: Understanding who God is, how He is, who am I, what is the nature of the world, what is happiness, what is sorrow, what is the Self?

Through listening (śravaṇam), one understands what is the Self and what is not-Self. Listening reduces the ego's identification with "I" and "mine". Attachment and delusion towards worldly objects decrease. Suffering is eliminated. This topic will be elaborated further.

While listening, the mind should not wander. One should listen with single-pointed concentration (ekāgracitta) and a pure mind. By listening properly in this way, one can truly attain liberation through listening alone. Therefore, listening holds the most important place above all else. Everyone should dedicate at least some time daily to listening.

2. Kīrtana Bhakti: Lovingly singing about the divine play of the Supreme Self, praising the Divine wholeheartedly with devotion, chanting the Divine names. Becoming overwhelmed with emotion and singing the glories of the Supreme Self like Ramdas, Tulsidas, Kabir, Tukaram, Sakhubai, Mirabai, Janabai, and Venubai. Abandoning ego and becoming one with the Divine through singing and dancing, forgetting oneself. Narrating stories of the Supreme Self, discussing spiritual topics - all this is Kirtan Bhakti.

3. Smaraṇa Bhakti: Repeatedly contemplating on the most sacred name of the Divine is called Smaraṇa Bhakti. Constantly remembering the pure name of the Supreme Self at all times - while sitting, walking, sleeping, eating, and even while enjoying sensual pleasures. The name is not separate from the Supreme Self - the name itself is the nature of the Supreme Self. By remembering the name, all sins are destroyed, all types of suffering are eliminated, all desires are fulfilled, and happiness and peace are attained. Through chanting Ram's name, the sinner Valmiki became a great soul. By Ram's name, stones floated on water.

vedantacorpus.org

4. Pādasevana Bhakti: We must serve the feet of the true guru who imparts knowledge, with body, speech and mind, just as we must hold the feet of those in the world from whom we need work done. Without the grace of the true guru, bondage of worldly existence cannot be removed.

Therefore, to attain freedom from birth and death, one should wash and worship the feet of the true guru with faith and devotion. The true guru destroys ignorance by teaching (true) knowledge. He reveals the true nature of reality. He bestows eternal bliss and supreme peace. All great souls have become great through service to the true guru. Through service to the true guru, purification of mind happens quickly and eligibility is attained. Once eligibility is attained, knowledge dawns without delay. Therefore, one should serve deities, Brahmins and great souls to the best of one's ability.

5. Arcana Bhakti: Worshipping the Supreme Self and the true guru with devotion is called arcana. One should worship Brahmins, the sun, fire, and those established in Brahman (brahmaniṣṭha). Daily one should worship one's chosen deity and true guru according to one's capacity with the sixteen types of offerings. The Lord himself has said:

devadvijaguruprājñapūjanaṃ śaucamārjavam ।

brahmacaryamahiṃsā ca śārīraṃ tapa ucyate ॥

(Bhagavad Gita 17.14)

"*Worshipping the Gods, the twice born, teachers and wise men, purity, straightforwardness, continence, and abstinence from injury are termed the bodily austerity.*"

Liberation is attained only by those who perform austerities. Therefore, all who desire liberation must unfailingly perform this austerity.

6. Vandana Bhakti: Vandana means prostration (namaskāra). One should fully prostrate to God and the true guru. One must

vedantacorpus.org

definitely prostrate upon seeing holy people, virtuous people, great souls and those established in Brahman. One should prostrate to devotees, enlightened beings, renunciates, noble souls, ascetics, yogis and other worthy recipients. One should perform salutations to the sun and circumambulation of the peepal tree. One should salute fire.

As it is said: mātṛdevo bhava । pitṛdevo bhava | (Taittiriya Upanishad 1.11.2) “*Let your mother be a goddess unto you. Let your father be a god unto you*.”

Parents are visible gods. One should unfailingly offer salutations to them every day. As it is said, "For a wife, her husband is the supreme deity," a woman should without fail offer salutations to her husband, who is a form of the divine, every day. If one fails to offer salutations to those worthy of respect, it accrues sin. Salutation demonstrates surrender. It reduces ego. Salutations destroy sins and bring the blessings of the great.

7. Dāsyabhakti: One should understand that this entire universe belongs to the Supreme Self, and God is the master of all this. I am His servant. Like a servant performs his master's tasks, one should always be in God's presence and perform all duties there. Without discriminating between high and low responsibilities, one should perform all types of God's work with dedication. One should increase God's glory day by day. Building temples, renovating them, providing vehicles, chariots, pavilions, umbrellas, and whisks for God's festivals – all these are forms of servant devotion.

Hanuman attained the form of Rama by being Rama's servant. Those who first become servants eventually become Shankara (the Divine). Those who say "I am a servant" (dāso 'haṃ) eventually attain the realization of "I am That" (so'ham). Therefore, one should first become a servant and perform service to the Supreme Self. Generally, people are not servants of Rama but servants of desire. They are servants of pleasures and worldly life. One who is a servant to these experiences

vedantacorpus.org

various troubles. Whoever becomes a servant of the Supreme Self attains true happiness and peace. One should serve the true Guru just as one serves God.

8. Sākhya Bhakti: Considering the Supreme Self as one's friend, one should cultivate His friendship. One should serve Him. The cowherds considered the Lord as their friend, served Him, and became pure. Arjuna became blessed by considering Sri Krishna as his friend. One should realize that the Lord is one's true well-wisher and the real companion, and strive to earn His love. One should bind the Supreme Self with pure love, just as Sahadeva bound the Lord with his bonds of affection. One should behave in accordance with what pleases Him. In gaining the Lord's friendship, one should not be concerned about one's own comfort. One should use all of one's body, mind, and wealth solely to earn His love. One should understand that the Supreme Self alone is the father, mother, relative, and all wealth - He is everything. This is called friendship devotion (sākhya Bhakti). One should have the same devotion towards the Guru as towards God.

9. Atmanivedana Bhakti: Atma means (the) Self, and nivedana means offering. Atma-nivedana means offering oneself to the Supreme Self. This is the best, most excellent, and final form among the nine types of devotion. To practice this, one should first understand who the Supreme Self is, what He is like, and what His true nature is. Then one should understand who one is, what one is like, and what one's true nature is. One should understand the relationship between God and oneself. Finally, learning from a true Guru, one should offer one's human nature and individual self to the Supreme Self and realize one's true divine nature - this is Atma-nivedana. After offering everything to God, even the notion of "I" is offered. Then everything becomes the form of the Supreme Self. Upon reflection, it becomes as if "I" does not exist. Only the Supreme Self exists everywhere. There is absolutely nothing other than Him - this becomes one's experience (anubhava). This is called Atma-nivedana. This is also called supreme devotion (para-bhakti).

vedantacorpus.org

Through this alone, all sorrows will vanish. Through this alone, supreme peace is attained. Through this alone, birth and death are transcended. Through this alone, liberation is achieved. Self-surrender is called union with the Divine. Without the ninth form of devotion, which is self-surrender, one cannot escape the cycle of birth and death. This is the truth. This is what the Vedas proclaim. This is what the great souls declare.

In this way, through the nine forms of devotion, attachment to the world, to worldly life, to sense objects, and to the body easily falls away. The desire for liberation arises. One becomes qualified for knowledge. Moreover, devotion itself brings knowledge.

Section 2 – On Spiritiual Practice (sādhana)

How should one fix the mind on the Supreme Self?

| Om śrīgurubhyo namaḥ |

Even while practicing these spiritual disciplines, no matter how much we try to hold onto the mind, it escapes our grasp and runs away. During japa and meditation, the mind wanders like the wind. It cannot remain steady even on the Supreme Self, who is the treasure of bliss. What remedy should be employed for this? Arjuna asked this question to his guru, Sri Krishna. To this, the Lord replied:

śrībhagavānuvāca —

asaṃśayaṃ mahābāho mano durnigrahaṃ calam ।

abhyāsena tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca gṛhyate ॥

(Bhagavad Gita 6.35)

"*The Blessed Lord said: Doubtless, O mighty armed, the mind is hard to restrain and restless; but by practice, O son of Kunti, and by indifference it may be restrained.*"

vedantacorpus.org

What you say is true. There is no doubt about it. But through constant, uninterrupted practice of disciplines like japa and meditation (japadhyānā), and through detachment - that is, by seeing the faults in sense objects - the mind comes under control. The mind goes outward because it believes: The world is real; there are many objects of enjoyment in it; I should obtain them; I should derive pleasure from them. Some objects cause me pain; I should be free from them. Due to this delusion, the mind constantly runs about. Just as we try to stop small children from eating dirt by explaining "Eating dirt will upset your stomach. Don't eat this. I'll give you tasty sweets instead. Come with me," in the same way, we must use various reasoning methods to dissuade this childlike mind from consuming the dirt of sense objects.

One should advise the mind as follows: In the world, people generally give advice to others but do not advise themselves. Only a wise person gives advice to himself. One should advise the mind in this way: "O mind, why are you running outwards unnecessarily? What is there outside that can give you happiness? There is nothing. All this is just your imagination." One should further advise:

1. The world is not real

A skilled artist beautifully paints houses, people, lakes, plants, trees, and animals on a wall with colors. They appear as if they are real. But just because they appear so, is there anything actually there? No; there is only the wall and nothing else. It just appears that way due to the colors. Similarly, on the wall of the Supreme Self, the world appears in various forms due to the colors of Māyā. Even though it appears this way, the world is not real at all. What truly exists is only the Supreme Self, which is the foundation for the appearing world - this is what should be taught to the mind.

vedantacorpus.org

In movies, various objects appear. Even though they appear, is there anything actually there? No; a child who doesn't understand this thinks the objects seen there are real and wants them. Similarly, in this world-like movie, the ignorant child-like person thinks what he sees is real and struggles thinking, 'I should get this, I should get that.' However, the wise person (viveki) knows that in the movie, there is only a screen; various scenes appear due to the movie;

Just as one does not desire to obtain objects seen in a movie, knowing they are not real, similarly, this world-like cinema is projected on the screen of the Supreme Self. This Supreme Self is without name and form, without modification, without thought constructs, formless (nirākāra), actionless (niṣkriya), all-pervading (sarvatra), complete, pure, and of the nature of existence-consciousness-bliss. It is veiled by Māyā, which acts like a movie.

Similarly, in dreams, many objects appear. Are they real just because they appear? No. Likewise, this is a daydream. Although many separate things appear here, in reality, nothing exists. The notion that anything exists is mere illusion. Just as the dream world is simply a play of the mind, so too is this entire world, which appears to be real and wakeful, merely a game of the mind. This is because the entire world appears only when the mind is present. When the mind is absent, nothing appears. In waking and dreaming states, the world appears because the mind is present. In deep sleep, when the mind is absent, neither the world, nor worldly affairs, nor pleasure and pain appear.

Let's consider the waking and dream states as real. What is the nature of reality? " *Existence is what can never be negated*" (satyatvaṃ bādharāhityaṃ, Panchadashi 3.29). That which remains unchanged in the three periods of time and three states of consciousness, which does not perish, which remains constant, and which transcends space (deśa), time (kāla), effect (kārya), cause (kāraṇa), and so on – that alone is real.

vedantacorpus.org

However, the world that appears in the waking state does not appear in the dream state; the world that appears in the dream state does not appear in the waking state. Even while appearing, it does not remain constant but undergoes continuous change and modification. Therefore, this is not real. It is merely an illusion of the mind.

2. There is no happiness in the world

viṣaṃ dṛṣṭvā'mṛtaṃ dṛṣṭvā viṣaṃ tyajati buddhimān |
ātmānamapi dṛṣṭvāhamanātmānaṃ tyajāmyaham ||
(Atmabodha Upanishad 17)
"*A man of intellect, seeing (before him) poison as well as nectar, would surely avoid the poison. Even so, having seen the Atman as well, (along with what is not the Atman), I will verily give up what is not the Atman*."
(Transl.: Sāmānya Vedānta Upanisad-s by Sri T R Srinivasa Ayyangar)

Their attachment to these objects disappears. Understanding this, spiritual aspirants should instruct their minds thus:

"*O mind! There is nothing here. Why do you run after this non-existent world, mistaking it to be real? There is no happiness for you in this.*"

Just as a deer is deluded by a mirage in the desert and runs towards it thinking it to be water, the "mind-deer" is deluded by the illusion of happiness in the world and runs after it. But the deer finds no water and its thirst is not quenched; it only increases its exhaustion. Similarly, the mind finds no real happiness in the world. Its sorrow only increases and its thirst for happiness is never quenched. Yet it continues to see happiness where there is none. Upon careful reflection, one realizes there is not even a trace of happiness in the world.

vedantacorpus.org

Like Rama who chased after the illusory deer in the forest at Sita's behest, only to become tired and frustrated as the deer always eluded his grasp, the individual soul chases after worldly objects thinking they will bring happiness. Only when Rama realized through discrimination that it was not a real deer but a demon in disguise was he able to end the delusion by striking it down with an arrow. Similarly, the seeker must use discrimination to break the illusion of happiness in the world.

In this forest-like world, deluded by ignorance, one runs after imaginary and unreal sense pleasures. Just when one thinks "I have attained happiness", it again flees elsewhere. Thinking "This will bring happiness, that will bring happiness", one keeps chasing after things endlessly. Thus, in the end, without attaining happiness, one becomes exhausted and frustrated after much struggle.

When, like Rama, through discrimination and inquiry (vivekavicāra) one realizes that sense pleasures are not true happiness; they only appear as happiness due to delusion; they are actually only a form of suffering; I have been deceived by not understanding this; there is not even a trace of happiness in worldly sense enjoyments - when one realizes this and shoots the arrow of Self-knowledge, this delusion is dispelled.
The running after sense objects stops. The various struggles and sufferings come to an end. The exhaustion and frustration over these things cease. The dying of craving to accumulate things stops. Only then does one attain true happiness and peace without a trace of sorrow.

In this way, one must show the mind in various ways that there is no happiness in the world. One must contemplate and examine the defects in sense enjoyments. It is only because the mind believes there is happiness in sense objects that it desires them and runs after them.

vedantacorpus.org

3. There is no happiness in sensory enjoyments, only suffering

Indulging in sense pleasures is like a fool who sees honey smeared on the sharp edge of a sword. Wanting to enjoy the honey, he licks the sword's edge and cuts his tongue. Just as that foolish person cut his tongue for a drop of honey's taste, such is the fate of one who indulges in sense pleasures. For one devoid of discrimination, the foolish man, seeking pleasure from sense objects instead experiences terrible suffering.

Fruits made of clay and painted to look real may appear like actual fruits, but eating them only fills the mouth with dirt. Similarly, sense objects appear to give pleasure when seen, but experiencing them leads only to suffering. There is no real pleasure, only the illusion of pleasure.

Someone brings you a sweet laddu. It looks good and tasty, and as you are about to eat it, a trusted friend warns you there is poison in it. Would you still eat it? Never. Even if starving, you wouldn't touch it. Similarly, the mind runs after sense pleasures thinking there is happiness in them. But they are filled with the poison of suffering. It is said:

sukhaṃ vaiṣayikaṃ śokasahasreṇāvṛtatvataḥ |
duḥkhameveti matvāha nālpe'sti sukhamityasau ||
(Panchadashi 11.21)
“*As the happiness derived from sense-objects is covered by thousands of afflictions, it is misery only. There is therefore no happiness in the limited.*”

Like "*a mustard seed of pleasure and a mountain of pain*", to obtain one pleasure one must experience thousands of sufferings. That which brings joy once causes sorrow another time. What gives pleasure once leads to difficulty and pain later. The same thing that makes you smile one day makes you cry another day. If something is sweet, it should always be sweet. How can it be called truly sweet if it is sweet one time and bitter

vedantacorpus.org

another? Similarly, pleasure should always give pleasure. How can it be called real pleasure if it gives pleasure once and pain another time? Sense enjoyments give pleasure sometimes and pain other times. Therefore, they are not real pleasure. There is no happiness other than sorrow.

yo vai bhūmā tatsukhaṃ nālpe sukhamasti bhūmaiva sukhaṃ bhūmā tveva vijijñāsitavya iti bhūmānaṃ bhagavo vijijñāsa iti | "*That which is infinite, is alone happiness. There is no happiness in anything finite. The infinite alone is happiness. But one must desire to understand the infinite'. 'Revered sir, I desire to understand the infinite*"
(Chandogya Upanishad 7.23)

That which is great, complete, true, eternal, and unchanging - that alone is real happiness. Apart from this, the Vedas declare that everything else that appears is not happiness. The entire visible world, the objects within it, and their enjoyments are all limited, impermanent, momentary, and appear only to disappear. They appear on the surface of non-discrimination. When examined with discrimination, they become as if non-existent.

4. One loses power through sensual enjoyments

śvobhāvā martyasya yadantakaitatsarvendriyāṇāṃ jarayanti tejaḥ | api sarvaṃ jīvitamalpameva tavaiva vāhāstava nṛtyagīte || (Katha Upanishad 1.1.26)
"*O Death, all this is so much ephemerals lasting only till tomorrow. They waste away the power of all the senses. All life is indeed a trifling. The vehicles are Yours alone. The dance and music are Yours.*"

All pleasures and fortunes last only for a short time. They sap the vigor of all the senses. Day by day they diminish and disappear in a short time. All these eventually become food for death and are destroyed.

vedantacorpus.org

What happens by indulging in sense objects like sound, touch, etc.? Just as when sugarcane is put in a press, all its juice is extracted leaving only dry fiber and its essence is destroyed, similarly, by indulging in sense objects, the essence present in all the senses is drained away. Their vigor diminishes. Indulgences destroy a person's righteousness, vitality, wisdom, radiance and fame. They nullify the powers of discrimination (vivekaśakti), contemplation (vicāraśakti), memory (jñāpakaśakti), endurance (sahanaśakti), and virtues like self-control etc. (śamadamādi). They eliminate all happiness, peace and contentment. Sense objects destroy everything. They strongly increase attachments, aversions, desires, anger, etc. They destroy everything that belongs to a human being. Sense enjoyments are the cause of all calamities.
The Bhagavad Gita also explains this:

viṣayendriyasaṃyogādyattadagre'mṛtopamam ।

pariṇāme viṣamiva tatsukhaṃ rājasaṃ smṛtam ॥

(Bhagavad Gita 18.38)
"*That pleasure which arises from the contact of the sense organs with the objects, at first like nectar, in the end like poison, that is declared to be Rajasic.*"
When a fish swallows a piece of meat attached to a hook, it does so easily, happily, and pleasurably. The swallowing itself is pleasurable; however, when it comes out, it doesn't come out the same way. It comes out causing strange pain to the fish, sucking its very life. Similarly, the pleasures that come from the union of the senses and their objects initially appear like nectar at that moment, feel pleasurable, and seem very nice. But in the end, the result is that one's fate becomes like that of the fish that ate the meat out of desire and lost its life. Pleasures turn out to be like poison. They destroy strength, vigor, beauty, wisdom, intellect, prosperity, enthusiasm, and all kinds of power. As a result of unrighteousness, they drag one to hell in the end.

vedantacorpus.org

5. The objects of enjoyment consume the enjoyer

bhogā na bhuktā vayam eva bhuktāḥ |
(Vairagya Shatakam of Bhartṛhari 7)
"*We have not enjoyed mundane pleasures, but ourselves have been devoured by them*."

A peculiarity of sense enjoyments is that one does not really enjoy them as one thinks. Rather, the enjoyments consume the person. This is because after experiencing sense objects once, even if those same objects are present and unchanged, one is unable to enjoy them again. What was initially desirable and lovable becomes undesirable in the end.
In the end, it becomes the object of aversion. One is conquered and defeated by these very things.

For example, how long can one look at beautiful sights like cinema, women, and children, no matter how pleasing they are? After a long time, one gets tired of them. How long can one listen to music, even if it's very melodious? After some time, one doesn't want to hear it anymore. How much of one's favorite delicious food can one eat? It becomes nauseating. How long can one smell fragrant substances? After a long time, it causes a headache. Similarly, this applies to objects of touch as well. Considering all this, does one enjoy the pleasures or do the objects of pleasure consume the person? Who loses? Isn't it oneself? How long do all these enjoyments and fortunes last? Only for a short time. Life itself is brief. Even the lifespan of all beings up to the four-headed Brahma is only for a short duration. Eventually, everything succumbs to death one day.

6. Rebirth is due to desire for sense objects

na jātu kāmaḥ kāmānāmupabhogena śāmyati |
haviṣā kṛṣṇavartmaiva bhūya evābhivardhate ||
(Manusmriti 2.94)

vedantacorpus.org

“*Never is desire appeased by the enjoyment of desires; it only waxes stronger, like fire by clarified butter.*”
(Transl.: Manusmriti with the Commentary of Medhatithi by Ganganatha Jha)

Just as fire blazes more intensely when offerings are poured into it, rather than diminishing or being extinguished, similarly, it is not possible to attain peace, contentment or satisfaction by enjoying sense objects thinking "*I will derive pleasure from them.*" The more one indulges, the more the latent tendencies, attachments, dissatisfaction and restlessness increase and strengthen. They do not decrease at all. Gradually, the body's strength diminishes rather than increasing. However, the desire for sense objects only keeps increasing day by day and does not reduce even slightly. There is no strength left to enjoy the sense objects. However, the desire to enjoy remains strong. It is said that a boy once asked an old man, "Grandpa, will you get married?" To which the old man reportedly replied, "Who will give me a wife now?" Such is the power of sensual enjoyment. Even when the body grows old, the impressions do not age. In fact, they only mature. The power of impressions increases while the digestive power decreases. Even when old, one desires to eat various delicious foods. But the ability to digest is no longer there. Since birth, one has eaten countless types of food. If all that was eaten were to be gathered in one place, it could feed many people. Yet, the desire has not diminished. Even when close to death, the wish to enjoy worldly pleasures does not cease. One day, due to these very impressions of sensual objects, one gives up their life. It is because of these impressions that one has to be reborn. Thus, caught in the cycle of birth and death, one is born in various lowly forms, suffering repeatedly.

kāmyādidoṣadṛṣṭyādyāḥ kāmādityāgahetavaḥ |
prasiddhā mokṣaśāstreṣu tānanviṣya sukhī bhava ||
(Panchadashi 4.58)
“*Well-known in the teachings meant for freedom are the means for freeing oneself from desires, etc. by the practices of seeing*

vedantacorpus.org

the defects of following desires, etc. Adhering to these (teachings), may you have a pleasant life."

In this way, one should contemplate the faults and suffering present in sense objects in various ways. Even if one has eaten the finest of delicacies, if it comes out as vomit, does one desire to eat it again? No, because it appears disgusting. Only an ignorant dog would eat it. Just as one finds it repulsive to even remember the waste one has excreted and never recalls it, similarly, if one sees and understands the faults and suffering in sensual enjoyments, then the mind will cease to remember them altogether.

7. Who attains eternal happiness?

bāhyasparśeṣvasaktātmā . vindatyātmani yatsukham ।

sa brahmayogayuktātmā . sukhamakṣayamaśnute ॥

(Bhagavad Gita 5.21)

"*With the self unattached to external contacts, he finds the joy which is in the Self; with the Self engaged in the contemplation of Brahman he attains the endless joy*."

Those who do not indulge in, love, desire or become attached to sense objects like sound and touch that are perceived by the senses; those brave ones who, through discrimination and inquiry, withdraw their mind and intellect from external sense objects and fix them firmly on the inner Self - their true nature which is the Supreme Bliss, the Supreme Self, or the Guru who is of the nature of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss; those who establish and dissolve their mind and intellect in that essence alone - only they attain the endless, eternal, infinite, complete happiness that is free from objects and destruction.

The Upanishads confirm this:

vedantacorpus.org

parāñci khāni vyatṛṇatsvayambhūstasmātparāṅ paśyati nāntarātman | kaściddhīraḥ pratyagātmānamaikṣadāvṛttacakṣuramṛtatvamicchan ||
(Katha Upanishad 2.1.1)
"*The self-existing Atman (as though) injured the five outgoing senses. Therefore, one naturally sees only the outside, not the self from within. A rare discerning person comes to see (know) the self from within also, having directed the attention within, seeking freedom from death*."

Just as some people swim against the current of a river, in the same way, even though the natural tendency of the senses is to be outward-facing, and even though they try to pull one outward, those who are wise, intelligent, and discerning completely restrain their senses from the pull of objects, turn them inward, and observe the activities of all the senses. They establish themselves in the nature of the Self, which is the innermost and the foundation of everything. Such people attain immortality. For one who is always thinking about external objects of sound, touch, etc., for one who is constantly contemplating these, self-realization will certainly never happen. They will never attain immortality, the state free from death, or eternity.

One who aspires must completely abandon thoughts and memories of objects perceived by the senses. Naturally looking outward at non-Self objects is avidyā (ignorance) that obstructs Self-realization. Along with this, there is another manifestation of ignorance - the thirst, attachment and infatuation for pleasures in this visible world and unseen higher realms (paraloka). This avidyā (ignorance or misunderstanding) prevents the (true) understanding of the Self (ātmadarśana).

Therefore, only those who have given up attachment to objects in both realms, who have abandoned thoughts of them, who look inward, and who fix their mind and intellect on the nature of the Self, attain eternal bliss.

vedantacorpus.org

8. Eternal bliss is within oneself

If one observes reality with a discerning eye (vicāradṛṣṭi), one finds that perfect, eternal, undecaying bliss (wholeness) is fully present within oneself. There is no happiness in external objects or anywhere else. Let us examine your own experience. Currently, you believe that happiness comes from objects of enjoyment, and without them there is no happiness. So you accumulate various things, thinking they bring happiness. You say there is no happiness without them.

However, even with many objects of enjoyment, you eventually get bored, reject them, and go to sleep. Upon waking, you say you were happy. At that time, all fatigue, weariness and worry had completely gone. To be free of fatigue, worry and weariness, to experience happiness without a trace of sorrow - what objects of enjoyment were present then? Tell me. In deep sleep, you experience happiness without any objects, and there is no sorrow. In the waking state, even with many pleasures and comforts, happiness is not obtained and sorrow is not absent.

If one contemplates in this manner, it becomes evident through reason (yukti) and experience (anubhava) that happiness exists only within oneself and nowhere outside. Like the saying, "*Carrying the child in their arms, they searched the entire village*" you are searching for happiness everywhere outside when it is within you.

An old woman was searching on the street at night. Someone asked her, "Grandmother, what are you looking for?" She replied, "I've lost my needle and I'm searching for it." When asked where she had lost it, she said, "In the house." How can a needle lost inside the house be found by searching outside? Similarly, how can happiness that exists within oneself be found by searching outside? No matter how much one searches, it cannot be found; it's merely a waste of effort. Therefore, the wise person should learn to search within, abandoning the external search.

vedantacorpus.org

A dog chews on bones. It mistakes the blood from its own gums for blood coming from the bone. It enjoys drinking its own blood, believing it's from the bone. Finally, it howls in pain from the wounds caused by the bone. Similarly, the ignorant person, like a dog, the one attached to sense objects, the one craving for pleasures, foolishly believes that happiness lies in sense objects. They struggle and suffer to acquire objects of enjoyment and indulge in them.

ātmābhimukhadhīvṛttau svānandaḥ pratibimbati |
(Panchadashi 11.44a)
"*Directing his thoughts towards the Self, he experiences the bliss of the Self reflected in the intellect.*"

During the time of enjoyment, when the mind becomes concentrated and turns inward, the bliss of the Self shines forth from within. At that time, one experiences one's own bliss. Not understanding this secret, just as the dog thinks the blood comes from the bone, the person lacking discrimination between the essential and non-essential (sārāsāraviveka), attached to sense objects, thinks happiness comes from the objects themselves. In the end, just as the dog howls from the wounds caused by the bones, such a person constantly experiences sorrow from sense objects that are like bones. The enjoyment of sense objects by such a person in this world is no different from worms enjoying filth. There is no doubt about this.

9. Method to fix the mind on the Supreme Self

"*He is either meditating on the image of God which is taken for spiritual penance, or he is inwardly riveted to the Atman. Otherwise also, his mind is merged in listening to and brooding over the glory of God*." (Dasabodha 14.7.16)

In this way, one should repeatedly contemplate on the suffering caused by sense objects like sound and touch, and their flaws such as impermanence, transitoriness, and illusory nature. By

vedantacorpus.org

doing so, attachment and love for them will decrease. If intense discrimination is practiced, eventually all attachment to sense objects will completely disappear.

After such contemplation, one should advise the mind: "*O mind, do not wander outwards needlessly. There is no happiness there, only sorrow. Reflect and see with discrimination*." Eternal bliss free from sorrow exists in the Self, in the Supreme Self, or in the true Guru. Therefore, one should tell the mind: "*Always engage in Self- inquiry (ātmānusandhāna), or on the true Guru, or if not possible, meditation on your chosen deity (Iṣṭadevatā).*"

By advising the mind in this way, it comes under control. One should earnestly pray: "*O Guru in my heart, bless me to stop the mind's wanderings, remove thoughts of sense objects, and always meditate on your nature of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss*." This is the best method above all others.

The Vedas declare: "From waking up to sleeping again, contemplate only on the nature of Brahman." "*From birth until death, day and night, engage only in contemplation of the Supreme Self, giving up all other thoughts*." If one cannot remain constantly established in the Self, if Self- inquiry fails, if listening and reflection are not possible, then at least practice meditation on one's chosen deity (upāsanāmūrtidhyāna). If one fails, then continuously engage in any one of these practices without break.

10. The importance of śravaṇam (to spiritual teachings)

"*Now listen to the means to achieve spirituality. It is surely the art of listening which is a very useful means.*"
(Dasabodha 7.8.1)

The wise says that listening is a key means for attaining the highest truth. Through this, one definitely gains true equanimity. For the seeker who wishes to be free from all sorrows and

vedantacorpus.org

troubles, to attain eternal happiness and peace, to be liberated from the bondage of worldly existence and achieve liberation (mokṣa) - the main sādhana they should undertake is to listen attentively and devotedly every day without fail to the teachings on the Self given by the Guru (brahmaniṣṭha).

What benefit comes from such listening (śravaṇam)? Undoubtedly, one gains complete contentment and supreme peace. The wise ones elaborate extensively in their teachings on what other benefits arise from listening in this way. Here we mention just a few: Through listening, faith and devotion towards the guru arises. Trust in the Vedas and scriptures grows. Attachment to sense objects diminishes. The poverty of desire is removed and supreme dispassion is attained. The mind is purified through listening. The fickle mind becomes steady (niścalam). Eventually, one realizes the nature of Brahman. Discrimination and proper examination (vivekavicāra) arise. Through śravaṇam, identification with the body fades. Association with the wicked ceases. Lust and anger vanish. One realizes that the body, senses, vital force (prāṇa), mind, intellect and ego-sense (ahaṃkāra) are not the true Self. One gains certainty that one is the witness (sākṣi) who observes all these.

"*There is nothing so useful as listening. Everything is possible by listening and by listening we get the means to ferry across the river of earthly life.*" (Dasabodha 7.8.16)

For a seeker of liberation (mumukṣu), for a spiritual aspirant (sādhaka), there is no superior practice equal to listening (śravaṇam). Everything is accomplished through listening. Listening is a very important means to be liberated from this ocean of worldly existence. Even one's bad qualities are removed through listening. Doubts disappear, certain knowledge is attained. Through śravaṇam, the individual soul (jīva) becomes liberated while living (jīvanmukta). One becomes the Supreme Self itself.

vedantacorpus.org

Therefore, everyone should listen unfailingly every day. If the mind remains impure, it is purified through listening. *What's the use of listening? I understand everything they say. Don't neglect such thoughts.* Just as you do daily what you have already done, like eat what you have already eaten and don't get bored with these activities, similarly, one should listen to deliberations on the nature of the Self (ātmatattva), devotion, knowledge, dispassion without getting bored, even if it's something you've heard before. By listening like this, day by day, it becomes clearer to the mind. If one gets bored with this, it's difficult to attain the state of perfection (pūrṇa-sthiti).

If gurus, or if they are not available, great souls or realized sages (jñāni-s) are speaking about Self-inquiry (ātmavicāra), one should go and listen without fail. One should not make excuses about inconvenience and avoid it. Just as you would abandon all other activities and seek out a doctor if you were afflicted with a terrible disease, similarly, to be liberated from this extremely terrible disease of worldly existence that gives sorrow every moment, one should use discrimination to abandon all obstacles and seek out great souls who are the medical doctors for this worldly disease. Every day, even for a short time, one should listen to deliberations on the Self and non-Self (ātmānātmavicāra) from noble beings established in Brahman.

Just as food for the stomach and clothes for the body are absolutely essential for a person every day, similarly, knowledge concerning the Self, listening to spiritual discourses and lectures (adhyātmaśravaṇa) by noble beings are absolutely essential food for the mind. If one eats excess food, it can cause indigestion and trouble. But there's no such trouble from excessive listening. On the contrary, all troubles, sorrows, and restlessness disappear and the mind will become peaceful.

The more you listen to the teachings of great souls, the better it is. One should listen with a pure and focused mind. By listening in this manner, attachments and aversions, desires and anger,

vedantacorpus.org

lack of discrimination, misconduct, pride (and egotism), and worldly attachments - all these are removed; (in that way) Atmaniṣṭhaṃ is attained. Therefore, one should unfailingly listen to the guru's teachings every day.

For seekers of liberation, listening to deliberations about the Self (ātmavicāra) is a great spiritual practice. Some people ridicule those who merely listen, asking what benefit can come from it. But they don't understand the importance of listening: King Parikshit, tormented by the fear of death, listened to the Bhagavata from Sage Shuka for seven days and was freed from the fear of death. King Khatvanga attained liberation by listening to the teachings about the Self for just one muhurta (48 minutes). Arjuna, caught in grief and delusion, listened to the Bhagavad Gita from his guru Sri Krishna and was freed from the ignorance causing his sorrow and delusion, gaining wisdom.

Everyone attains liberation through listening. How can one understand any subject without hearing about it? How can one know about something never heard before? What is devotion? What is knowledge? What is dispassion? What is happiness? What is sorrow? What is bondage? What is liberation? Who is a guru? Who is a disciple? What is spiritual practice? How should it be done? All these can only be understood by listening. Whether worldly or spiritual matters, nothing can be understood without listening. The essence is that one should continuously engage in listening.

How can those who neglect listening achieve spiritual goals? Therefore, listening is a key means to liberation (mokṣa-sādhana). However, one shouldn't listen to just anything. There are many types of scriptures, (like texts about) tarka, nyāya, mīmāṃsā, grammar, mathematics, poetry, stories, novels, etc. Seekers of liberation (mumukṣu-s) should not listen to all these. Then what should they listen to?

vedantacorpus.org

11. What should one listen to?

śravaṇena yasya galati dvaitāndha |
"*By hearing which, the blindness of duality disappears*"

One should listen to those scriptures and texts which dissolve the knots of ignorance, which destroy the sense of difference between 'I' and 'you', which reveal that 'All this is Atman' and 'All this is Brahman', which completely dispel the darkness of duality, which remove sorrow and delusion, and which eradicate attachment and aversion. That alone is the correct scripture. That alone should be listened to, spoken about, and read. What is truth (sat)? What is untruth (asat)? What is happiness? What is sorrow? What is Atman? What is non-Atman? Who am I? What is my true nature? What is bondage? What is liberation (mokṣa)? What is ignorance? What is knowledge? –
The scriptures that explain these topics are what seekers of liberation should listen to.

Scriptures that do not speak of devotion (bhakti), knowledge and dispassion are not really scriptures at all. Rather, they are knots that bind one tightly with worldly attachments. Stories and novels that entertain the mind, show the fruits of desire, and incline the mind towards sense objects should definitely not be listened to or read. This is because the mind takes the form of whatever thoughts we listen to or read.

One should absolutely not listen to thoughts that, when heard or read from books, cause the mind to become agitated, take on the shape of worldly matters, increase desires, become enslaved to lust and anger, or make yourself proud. These may provide temporary entertainment but ultimately lead to sorrow and downfall. Seekers of liberation should stay away from them.

One should listen only to those teachings that reduce the bonds of desire in the mind, eliminate lust and anger, and make the mind free from agitations and attuned to the Self. One should listen only to those teachings that remove the notion of a real

vedantacorpus.org

world, samsara, destroy the sense of body-identification (dehabuddhi), and bring the experiential realization (anubhava) that "*There is no world, no samsara, no body etc. I am the Self - Pure consciousness that is free from modifications and of the nature of bliss*." One should read only such books - this is what the great Gurus say.

Just as offering water instead of milk to a royal swan is of no use (* haṃsa symbolism), just as giving wealth and clothes instead of food to a hungry person does not satisfy, just as offering any enjoyable objects other than water does not pacify a thirsty person, just as nothing but health is desired by one suffering from disease - similarly, seekers and spiritual aspirants who wish to be freed from all sorrows, various troubles, endless misfortunes, birth and death, and who desire to attain Self-knowledge viz. liberation, Supreme bliss and eternal happiness, should listen only to Advaita Vedānta texts. They should not listen to other texts.

"*We should listen to books in which there is doctrine of non-duality explained and by which doubts are removed and objections are also cleared.*" (Dasabodha 7.9.5)

The great ones themselves assert that a seeker of liberation ought solely listen to the Advaita Vedānta texts that eradicate all doubts of the mind, eliminate body-identification, eliminate ignorance, and (as a result) attain Supreme peace. Just as hunger and it's suffering immediately disappear for one who was afflicted by hunger as soon as he eats food. Just as joy comes from experience, one who is tormented by the afflictions of this world, upon properly hearing and comprehending the truth of the Self from a right guru, instantly intuits the eradication of all worldly troubles and attains eternal peace and everlasting happiness.

Just as darkness disappears as soon as a lamp is lit, all sorrows vanish upon attaining Self-knowledge (ātmajñānam).

vedantacorpus.org

This is not mere words, but experientially proven truth (anubhavasiddha).

12. The importance of mananam (reflection)

For highly qualified aspirants (uttama adhikāri), doubts are removed through hearing (śravaṇam) alone. For those of average qualification, doubts are not fully resolved. For most people, it is through reflection (mananam) that doubts are eliminated. What is heard today becomes reflection tomorrow. Hearing the same again another day becomes contemplation (nididhyāsanam). One should reflect along with hearing. Reflection is even more important than hearing, as it makes knowledge free from doubt and quickly establishes certainty. Reflection means bringing what was heard from the guru into one's own experience through scriptural reasoning (śruti-yukti-anubhava). Just as one repeatedly ponders over and contemplates on something said about oneself, one should repeatedly reflect on and contemplate the nature of the Self. One should remove notions of not-Self and being firmly establish in the Self (ātmabhāva). Desire, anger, attachment, aversion, grief and delusion arise due to the notion that the body, etc., which is not-Self, is (understood as) the Self, as well as from the belief of a real world. This leads to bondage.

Therefore, one should reflect even more than hearing. One should constantly contemplate that one is the Self alone and not the body etc. (dehādi), and that there is nothing separate from the Self (ātmasvarūpa).

By contemplating that nothing truly exists [apart from Atman], and by reflecting in this manner, the mind becomes free from modifications. Then, contentment and peace are attained. The culmination of reflection (mananam) leads to deep contemplation (nididhyāsanam) and Self-realization (ātmasākṣātkāra).

vedantacorpus.org

Therefore, one should not merely hear the teachings from the Guru with one ear and let them out from the other. If one does so, they will never overcome the identification with the body (dehabuddhi). They will not attain steadfastness in the Self and will not gain happiness and peace.

Instead, one should unfailingly reflect upon and contemplate the teachings heard. One should establish themselves in their true nature. The mind should be dissolved in it. One should become the Self. This is the highest state of reflection (mananam).

13. The importance of meditating on the Guru

If (self)-inquiry is not possible and one doesn't know how to reflect, then one should meditate on the form of the Guru, their object of worship who imparted knowledge. Just as in worldly life, when we remember our acquaintances and loved ones, all their words come to memory, similarly, by meditating on the Guru, the teachings imparted by him come to remembrance. They manifest in the intellect.

Just as water doesn't flow through a pipe clogged with dirt, similarly, (self)- inquiry doesn't work in an impure mind. "*From purity (sattva) arises knowledge*" (sattvātsañjāyate jñānaṃ | Bhagavad Gita 14.17).

Only in a pure mind, deliberation of the Self and not-Self can take place (ātmānātmavicāra). Just as water flows swiftly once the pipe is cleaned and the dirt removed, similarly, since the Guru is of a pure nature, pondering on him purifies the mind, and the knowledge he taught come to remembrance. [As a result] the modifications in the mind disappear and Bliss is attained. Therefore, one should ponder on the Guru.

Whether it's meditating on the form of worship (upāsanāmūrti-dhyāna) or Self-inquiry, or if not these, then listening and reflecting (śravaṇamanana) - if one practises any of these

vedantacorpus.org

continuously without fail, then the mind will not wander elsewhere. Like a mute person or one without legs, it [the mind] will remain still and fixed on the Supreme Self alone.

Note:
To engage in Self-inquiry or meditation in the form of worship, or listening and reflection requires a certain capacity within the mind (antaḥkaraṇa). Without this, these practices are not possible. Therefore, to be able to do these practices, one must seek some easy ways to develop this capacity within the mind. Some of these are explained below.

14. Supportive means to attain eternal happiness

The following should definitely be abandoned as they are causes of bondage and sorrow:

(1) “I-sense” or Egoism (ahaṃkāra), possessiveness (mamakāra), hypocrisy (dāmbhika), arrogance (darpa), pride (abhimāna), desire (kāma), anger (krodha) - these should be abandoned.
(2) Transgressing scriptural injunctions and acting according to one's whims, lack of proper conduct, being impure, constant association with such people - these should be abandoned.
(3) Thinking that obtaining and enjoying objects of desire that arise in one's mind is the purpose of life and one's duty, and constantly striving for that alone; committing sinful acts without discrimination for that purpose; hating those who hinder this and even harming them to obtain desired objects of enjoyment - these should be abandoned.
(4) Considering earning money as the main goal and toiling day and night like a donkey for it; committing violence, deceit, treachery, cheating and injustice for it - these should be abandoned.
(5) One should not be proud thinking 'I am great'; one should give up behaving without discretion, becoming intoxicated with pride due to thinking 'I have power, I have wealth, I have

vedantacorpus.org

authority, I have knowledge, I am attractive, I possess a youthful quality'.
(6) One should give up useless activities.
(7) One should always avoid associating with fools and those who are obsessed with sensual pleasures, and stay away from such groups as much as possible.
(8) One should not be greedy for pleasures. One should give up sensual indulgences.
(9) One should give up speaking in ways that hurt others' feelings, telling lies, and speaking unnecessarily.
(10) One should not hate anyone; one should not wish ill for anyone even in their mind. One should give up cruelty.
(11) One should never harbor evil thoughts, that is, thoughts that corrupt the mind.
(12) One should stop constantly thinking about the never-ending world; being tied up with countless desires like ropes; being immersed in lust and anger - these things should be abandoned.
(13) One should not be proud thinking 'I am great, I am superior, I am worthy of worship'. One should give up the desire to gain respect and honor, and the wish to be considered better than others.

These things must be done necessarily because they lead to obtaining happiness and peace free from sorrow:

(1) Daily worship of God and the guru should be performed.
(2) Then, heartfelt prayers should be offered with devotion.
(3) Good people, wise ones, and Brahmins should be revered.
(4) Without fearing obstacles, one should bravely attempt to progress towards the Supreme Self.
(5) According to one's ability, charity (dānadharma) should be given to worthy recipients.
(6) Service should be rendered to the Guru and great souls.
(7) As much as possible, one should strive to engage in good company (satsaṅga). This is a practice very close to knowledge. Whenever possible, one should practice in a pure, solitary place free from the disturbance of worldly people.

vedantacorpus.org

To help turn away from worldly objects and towards the Supreme Self, one should:

(1) Be free from deceit and live with simplicity.
(2) Practice celibacy.
(3) Keep the body, senses, and mind pure.
(4) Speak only the truth.
(5) Recite hymns praising God. Engage in devotional worship.
(6) Read scriptures imbued with devotion, knowledge and detachment. (7) Keep the mind and senses under control, not allowing them free rein. (8) Cultivate positive thoughts.
(9) Restrain lust and anger.
(10) Constantly strive to turn the mind back towards the Supreme Self, away from its tendency to run after sense objects.
(11) Always remember one of the names of the Supreme Self.
(12) Develop detachment from sensual pleasures.
(13) Be compassionate to people who are suffering and try to help them as much as you can.
(14) See everyone as equal to oneself. Look upon all with love.
(15) Forgive others' mistakes generously without counting them.
(16) Be content with what the Supreme Self has given.
(17) Ensure one's actions do not hurt others' minds, and remain unaffected by others' behavior.
(18) Be indifferent to worldly matters.
(19) View pleasure and pain equally. Treat honor and dishonor, praise and blame alike.
(20) Practice being silent as much as possible.
(21) Resolve to attain knowledge by performing the necessary spiritual practices for liberation, no matter what.
(22) Contemplate the suffering caused by birth, death, old age and disease.
(23) Keep the mind steady whether desirable or undesirable things occur.
(24) Firmly believe that no one is higher than the Supreme Self, that He alone is the refuge, and meditate on Him constantly.
(25) Engage in Self-inquiry, discriminating between the Self and not-Self (ātmānātmavicāra).

vedantacorpus.org

By doing this, the inner instrument or mind (antaḥkaraṇa) becomes purified and a certain type of capability arises in it. When this happens, it becomes possible to intuit the Self (Atman), which is one's true nature; The capacity to establish oneself within Atman emerges, and one can remain as the Atman itself.

Note:
As stated in the first and second sections so far, those who perform spiritual practices and attain purity of the inner instrument (or mind) become spiritual aspirants. They alone gain true and complete knowledge, become free from all sorrows, and experience real happiness and peace. Let us explain how the aspirants (sādhaka-s) who have attained purity of mind in this way are.

15. Who is a spiritual aspirant (sādhaka)?

One who has renounced all negative qualities within oneself and keeps the company of virtuous people is called a spiritual aspirant. One who surrenders to a true guru, receives Self-knowledge (here, teachings about the Self) from them, and strengthens that knowledge is called a spiritual aspirant. One who always desires to hear about non-dual truth and daily listens to it, and who does Self-inquiry with great respect, is a spiritual aspirant. One who discriminates between the Self and not-Self (ātmānātmaviveka), destroys all doubts, and ascertains the nature of the Self is a spiritual aspirant.

One who removes body-identification (dehabuddhi) and firmly establishes Self-Insight (ātmabuddhi) is a spiritual aspirant. One who repeatedly engages in listening and contemplation with love and without tiredness is a spiritual aspirant. One who always shapes the mind in the form of the Self, abandons evil actions and bad habits, follows righteous actions and good conduct, daily renounces negative qualities and cultivates positive qualities, destroys ego-sense, removes attachment to

vedantacorpus.org

sense objects, and sees everyone with love - someone with these qualities is a spiritual aspirant.

One who repeatedly contemplates on their true nature, removing notions of not-self (anātmabhāva) like body, individual soul, woman, man, worldly life, and the universe, and instead cultivates the notion of the Self (ātmabhāva) - that is a spiritual aspirant. One who constantly reflects:
"I am not the body, senses, life-force, mind or intellect; I am the Pure consciousness that knows all these; I am the witness that observes all these; I am the Consciousness that illuminates all these" and abides in their true nature - that is a spiritual aspirant.

One who, through discrimination and inquiry, realizes that this visible world, though apparent, does not truly exist and is merely an imagination, and that all this is verily the Supreme Self - that is a spiritual aspirant. One who understands there is no difference between the waking state and dream state, and sees this waking state as a daydream - that is a spiritual aspirant. Just as everything in a dream was one's own self and there was nothing separate from oneself, similarly one who realizes that everything in the waking state is one's own Self-nature and there is nothing separate from the Self - that is a spiritual aspirant.

One who sees the entire manifest universe as a dream is a spiritual aspirant. Just as one who suffers in a dream due to sleep is freed from the fear of that dream upon waking, similarly one who, having been subject to ignorance, frees oneself from the dream of ignorance by attaining Self-knowledge, and strives to abide fearlessly in one's true nature, free from the sorrow of this illusory, imaginary worldly existence - that is a spiritual aspirant.

One who disregards this entire visible illusory manifestation and instead discerns the invisible, real, conscious Existence - that is a spiritual aspirant. One who experiences that nature which

vedantacorpus.org

cannot be accomplished or perceived - that is a spiritual aspirant. One who firmly affirms that there is never a world in me, who am the perfect (paripūrṇa), the embodiment of knowledge (jñānasvarūpa), and the pure consciousness (śuddhacaitanya), is the true spiritual aspirant.

An aspirant is one who understands that worldly existence, birth and death, praise and blame, desire and anger, attachment and aversion are never present in me, who is of the nature of knowledge, and remains unswayed by them, standing firm in one's true nature through discrimination.

An aspirant is one who sees oneself in all living beings and all living beings in oneself. An aspirant is one who perceives everything as the form of the Self, who remains as the very nature of the Self.
Aspirants should practice what comes naturally to the enlightened (jñāni) When this becomes natural, the aspirant is known as the Jñāni.

Section 3 – On Self-Knowledge (ātmajñāna)

| Om śrīgurubhyo namaḥ |

1. Liberation (mokṣa) is through Self-knowledge alone

tameva viditvātimṛtyumeti . nānyaḥ panthā vidyate'yanāya | (Svetasvatara Upanishad 3.8)
“*Having known that alone, one goes beyond death (ignorance). There is no other means for reaching.*”

Only upon realizing the true nature of the Self birth and death cease. Liberation (mokṣa) is attained through knowledge (jñānam) alone. The scriptures declare there is no other way besides this.

vedantacorpus.org

On this subject, there is a story about the sage Narada in the Chandogya Upanishad (ChUp. 7). Even though Narada was a divine sage (devarṣi) who had done all that was to be done and educated all the sciences, he still lacked peace and was sorrowful due to the absence of Self-knowledge - the knowledge of who he truly was as the knower of all these things. If this was the state of such a great being, how much more sorrow would an ordinary person experience who has done some small meritorious deeds, learned a little knowledge, and obtained trivial objects of enjoyment thinking they will bring happiness?

The divine sage Narada had the knowledge, ability and means to obtain whatever he desired. Yet despite all this, he could not escape sorrow or attain supreme peace. Therefore, wishing to be free from this sorrow and attain the highest eternal peace that surpasses all else, Narada - though a mind-born son of Brahma - approached [a teacher] setting aside pride in his lineage, learning and austerities.

Narada, abandoning all pride in his abilities, conduct, and accomplishments, came to Sanatkumara as a humble disciple, like an ordinary person. He asked the Brahmaniṣṭha Sanatkumara: "*O Lord, I have studied the RigVeda, the YajurVeda, the SamaVeda and the Atharvanas the fourth, the Itihasa Purana as the fifth, grammar, the rules for the worship of the ancestors, mathematics, the science of portents, the science of treasures, logic, the science of ethics, etymology, the ancillary knowledge of the Vedas, the physical sciences, the science of war, the science of the stars, the science related to serpents, and the fine arts and more. Master, despite all this, I know only a mantravid (knowledge of mantras) but not Ātmavid. O Lord, I have heard from great souls like you that 'a knower of Atman goes beyond grief' (tarati śokamātmaviditi, Chandogya Upanishad 7.1.3). Because I do not know the Self, I am drowning in an ocean of sorrow. Please help me cross this ocean of sorrow with the boat of Self-knowledge and make my life fulfilled*." Seeing Narada's humility, knowledge, and intense

vedantacorpus.org

desire to attain wisdom, Bhagavan Sanatkumara lovingly imparted Self-knowledge to him. Through this, Narada became blessed.

The essence of this story is that even if a person learns all worldly knowledge, performs severe austerities, composes wonderful poetry, or acquires and enjoys all the objects in the world, without knowing "Who am I?", fear and sorrow will not end; eternal happiness will not be attained. As stated in the Adhyatma Ramayana (śrīrāmagītā 9):

ajñānamevāsya hi mūlakāraṇaṃ |
"*The root cause of it (worldly life) is ignorance*".
Ignorance alone is the root cause of all misfortunes, all types of sorrows, and this worldly existence. Therefore, one must destroy this ignorance.
This is also expounded in the Bhagavad Gita. Some of those verses are given here:

nādatte kasyacitpāpaṃ na caiva sukṛtaṃ vibhuḥ ।
ajñānenāvṛtaṃ jñānaṃ tena muhyanti jantavaḥ ॥
(Bhagavad Gita 5.15)
"*The Lord takes neither the evil nor even the good deed of any; knowledge is covered by ignorance; thereby mortals are deluded*."

yajjñātvā na punarmohamevaṃ yāsyasi pāṇḍava |
yena bhūtānyaśeṣeṇa drakṣyasyātmanyatho mayi ||
(Bhagavad Gita 4.35)
"*Knowing which, thou shalt not again thus fall into error, O Pandava; and by which, thou wilt see all beings in thy Self and also in Me.*"

If you gain experiential knowledge (anubhava), you will be liberated from the inauspicious, misery-causing bondage of samsara.

vedantacorpus.org

jñeyaṃ yattatpravakṣyāmi yajjñātvāmṛtamaśnute ।
(Bhagavad Gita 13.12a)
“*That which has to be known I shall describe; knowing which one attains the Immortal.*

api cedasi pāpebhyaḥ sarvebhyaḥ pāpakṛttamaḥ |
sarvaṃ jñānaplavenaiva vṛjinaṃ santariṣyasi ||
(Bhagavad Gita 4.36)
“*Even if you are one who has done sins worse than any sinner, by the raft that is knowledge alone you will cross over all (forms of) karma demerit.*”

All suffering is the fruit of demerit. No matter how much demerit you have committed, if you take refuge in the boat of knowledge, you will cross over the ocean of demerit and suffering.

yathaidhāṃsi samiddho'gnirbhasmasātkurute'rjuna |
jñānāgniḥ sarvakarmāṇi bhasmasātkurute tathā ||
(Bhagavad Gita 4.37)
“*O Arjuna, just as a well-ignited fire reduces logs to ashes, so this fire that is knowledge reduces all karmas to ashes*.”

na hi jñānena sadṛśaṃ pavitramiha vidyate |
tatsvayaṃ yogasaṃsiddhaḥ kālenātmani vindati ||
(Bhagavad Gita 4.38)
“*Verily, there exists here no purifier equal to knowledge. He who is perfected by Yoga finds it in time in himself by himself.*”

śraddhāvāṃllabhate jñānaṃ tatparaḥ saṃyatendriyaḥ |
jñānaṃ labdhvā parāṃ śāntimacireṇādhigacchati ||
(Bhagavad Gita 4.39)
“*He obtains knowledge who is full of faith, who is devoted to it, and who has subdued the senses. Having gained knowledge, one immediately attains limitless peace.*”

vedantacorpus.org

bhoktāraṃ yajñatapasāṃ sarvalokamaheśvaram ।

suhṛdaṃ sarvabhūtānāṃ jñātvā māṃ śāntimṛcchati ॥
(Bhagavad Gita 5.29)
"*On knowing Me, the Lord of all sacrifices and austerities, the Great Lord of all worlds, the Friend of all beings, he goes to Peace*."

If one realizes (intuits) Me as the Supreme Self residing in the hearts of all beings, overseeing the fruits of all actions and witnessing all thoughts, they will be liberated from all bondage of samsara and attain eternal peace.

Sri Shankaracharya states in his commentary on the Bhagavad Gita:

tasmādgītāśāstre kevalādeva tattvajñānānmokṣaprāptiḥ na karmasamuccitāt , iti niścito'rthaḥ |
(Sri Shankaracharya, Bhagavad Gita Bhashyam 2.10)
"*Therefore, this is a settled fact in the Gita not by knowledge combined with action, but by knowledge of the Self alone, immortality is attained.*"

tasmāt kevalād eva jñānāt mokṣa ity eṣo'rtho niścito gītāsu sarvopaniṣatsu ca |
(Sri Shankaracharya, Bhagavad Gita Bhashyam 3 Upodghāta)
"*Hence, the well-ascertained conclusion in the Gītā and all the Upaniṣads is that Liberation follows from Knowledge alone*."

mithyājñāna-nimittaśca bandho na samyagjñānādṛte visraṃsitumarhati |
(Sri Shankaracharya, Brahma Sutra Bhashyam 4.2.8)
"*Bondage, of which wrong knowledge is the cause, does not deserve to be dissolved, except through true knowledge*."

An example of this: Just as a person crying out in fear due to a dream cannot be freed from that fear and sorrow by any means other than waking up, similarly, the soul that experiences

vedantacorpus.org

various sorrows in the sleep of ignorance due to the dream of plurality and worldly existence cannot find relief from sorrow and delusion or attain (true) happiness and peace except through the awakening of the knowledge of one's true nature.

anādimāyayā supto yadā jīvaḥ prabudhyate |
ajamanidramasvapnamadvaitaṃ budhyate tadā ||
(Sri Gaupdapada Karika 1.16)
"*When the jīva, asleep under the influence of beginningless māyā, is awakened, it then realizes birthless, sleepless and dreamless non-duality*."

There was an old woman in a village who had children and grandchildren. One day, in the dim light, she saw an old piece of rope in her backyard and mistook it for a snake. Frightened, she asked her son to kill the snake, but he couldn't see it. The old woman, still seeing the "snake," feared a snake plague in their house and asked her son to find a solution. The son consulted an astrologer who confirmed the snake problem and recommended a snake worship ritual. Even after performing the ritual, the old woman continued to see the "snake." Then they consulted a mantra expert and performed rituals. They had a yantra constructed by experts. Despite all efforts, the snake would not disappear. Money was spent and difficulties persisted, causing everyone concern.

Some people then took sticks and lamps, asked the old woman, and went to the place where the snake was supposed to be. When they brought the lamp to that spot, there was only a piece of rope. Seeing this, everyone laughed at their own ignorance.

"*Just as the snake is never present in the rope in all three times (past, present, future), similarly, from the ego-sense to the body, the entire world is not present in me, the non-dual Self.*"

The entire world that appears, starting from the ego (the sense of "I") including the intellect, mind, senses, and up to the physical body, is never present in the Self, which is one's true

vedantacorpus.org

nature. Without realizing this, just as the old woman mistook the rope for a snake due to illusion, even though one is the supreme Self unbound by any limitations, one suffers thinking "I am the individual soul, I am the body" due to delusion.

Just as they performed rituals, mantras, yantras, and snake worship to remove the non-existent snake, similarly, an individual performs yoga, sacrifices, vows, charity, righteousness, fasting, forest dwelling, meditation (dhyāna) concentration, samādhi and other severe austerities desiring liberation.

"*So long as there is no real knowledge, the birth and the death cycle cannot be avoided. Without the blessings of Guru, the degradation and the suffering in the womb cannot be avoided. All the meditations, concentrations, the postures and poses, all the devotional singing and prayers are futile so long as the knowledge of Brahman is not attained*."
(Dasabodha 5.1.35-36)
Just as the snake did not disappear without knowledge of the rope, similarly, without knowing one's true nature from a true guru, no matter what one does, bondage will not end; the cycles of suffering will not cease; birth and death will not be overcome. All the meditation, concentration, devotion and worship done without striving to gain self-knowledge become futile.

"*Whatever action is done without the base of knowledge becomes the root of rebirth. So, one must hold on to the feet of the Master, the Sadguru.*" (Dasabodha 5.1.22)

Whatever is done without knowledge leads to rebirth. Therefore, just as their fear of the snake vanished only when they looked at it with a lamp, similarly, only by surrendering to a true guru and understanding one's real nature from him does the light of knowledge remove all bondage born of ignorance, culminating in liberation.

The Supreme Lord says the same in the Bhagavad Gita:

vedantacorpus.org

teṣāmevānukampārthamahamajñānajaṃ tamaḥ ।
nāśayāmyātmabhāvastho jñānadīpena bhāsvatā ॥
(Bhagavad Gita 10.11)
"*Out of mere compassion for them, I, abiding in their self, destroy the darkness born of ignorance by the luminous lamp of knowledge.*"

For all these reasons, it is established that liberation is attained only through Self-knowledge (ātmajñānam).

2. What is ignorance (ajñānam)?

saṃsāraḥ paramārtho'yaṃ saṃlagnaḥ svātmavastuni |
iti bhrāntiravidyā syādvidyayaiṣā nivartate ||
(Panchadashi 6.10)
"*The confusion of considering this transmigration (with the attendant pain and pleasure) as real and affecting the supreme Self is called nescience. It is removed by the knowledge of Reality.*"

Ignorance is not the absence (here abhāva as 'non-existence') of knowledge, but wrong knowledge (mithyājñānam). It is the belief that the world (saṃsāra) perceived by the senses is (truly) real, that it is related to me, and that there are many separate beings in it like myself. This is the fundamental misunderstanding that must be removed through Self-knowledge.

Some people are different; some give me happiness; others give me sorrow. There are many objects here; I should derive pleasure from them - this understanding itself is ignorance. Considering (superimposing) the body, senses, mind, intellect etc. which are not the Self to be oneself, thinking that caste, lineage, relationships like husband, wife, children belong to oneself, believing that bodily changes, honor and dishonor, and mental pleasures and pains happen to oneself - all this is

vedantacorpus.org

ignorance. Thinking "I am a woman", "I am a man", "I am a child", "I am young", "I am old", believing "I was born in this place, at this time, in this family, and will die one day", thinking "I am rich", "I am poor", "I am educated", "I am ignorant" - all this is ignorance. Believing "I am the doer", "I am the experiencer", thinking "All this is mine", believing "I am born", "I die" - all this is called ignorance.

The essence is that people are mixing up the Self (ātma) and not-Self (anātma) and mistaking one for the other. The Self is of the nature of consciousness (jñānasvarūpa) and is real; the not-Self (anātma) is inert, imagined and (only) appears to be the Self. They mistake the real Self for the unreal not-Self. They attribute the qualities of the Self to the non-Self and vice versa.

In the Self which is pure consciousness (caitanyasvarūpa), there is no body, no worldly existence (saṃsāra), no universe (jagat), no states. They believe these non-existent things exist. This is wrong understanding. This is called ignorance (ajñānam) or avidyā.

3. What is the result of ignorance?

The result of ignorance is forgetting that one is the Self - nameless, formless, changeless, non-dual, of the nature of bliss, and all-pervading.

Even though one is completely whole and perfect (paripūrṇa), ignorance makes one believe that one is limited by name and form, confined only to this body, subject to modifications, full of imaginations, and in need of happiness. Though one (Atman) is devoid of birth and death, devoid of states, ignorance makes one believe that one has births and deaths, and states like childhood, youth, waking, dream etc.

Though there is nothing other than the Self, multiple objects appear due to ignorance. This produces desire and aversion,

vedantacorpus.org

likes and dislikes towards objects that seem separate from oneself. As a result, overcome by desire, one performs good and bad actions to obtain what is wanted and avoid what is unwanted. Due to the fruits of these actions, one experiences heaven and hell, gets caught in the cycle of birth and death, undergoes pleasures and pains, and suffers in various ways. All this is the result of ignorance. This is called saṃsāra. This is called bondage. This is explained in detail in the commentary (bhāṣyam) on Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.3.20 by Adi Shankaracharya.

Supplement:

tasmāt na ātmadharmaḥ avidyā ; na hi svābhāvikasyocchittiḥ kadācidapyupapadyate, savituriva auṣṇyaprakāśayoḥ । tasmāt tasyā mokṣa upapadyate |
(Adi Shankaracharya, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.3.20 Bhashyam)
"*Therefore, ignorance is not a natural characteristic of the Self, for that which is natural to a thing can never be eliminated, as the heat and light of the sun. Therefore, liberation from ignorance is possible*."

nāvidyā'syetyavidyāyāmevā'sitvā prakalpyate |
brahmadṛṣṭyā tvavidyeyaṃ na kathañcana yujyate ||
(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad Sambandha Vārtika 176 of Sri Sureshvara)
"*No; nescience is predicated (of Brahman) (by the jiva which is) in the state of nescience. From the standpoint of Brahman, however, this nescience is by no means intelligible*."

4. What is liberation (mokṣa)?

The word "mokṣa" (liberation) is commonly used in everyday speech. People say "I want to be liberated from this disease" or "I want to be free from this debt" etc. From this, we understand that mokṣa or liberation means freedom or release. What does

vedantacorpus.org

one need to be liberated from? From all sorrows, from restlessness, from worries, from the root cause of these - birth and death, from childhood-youth-old age, from diseases, from desire and anger, from ego-sense (ahaṃkāra) and possessiveness (mamakāra), from body-identification (dehābhimāna), from the intoxication of knowledge-wealth-youth-power-beauty, from evil actions, from evil thoughts, from body-awareness, from the lack of discrimination that causes all these, from the entire chain of misfortunes, and from ignorance or avidyā which is the root cause of all these - freedom from the grip of all these is liberation.

Liberation (mokṣa) is attaining supreme peace, discrimination, detachment, and Self-abidance through knowledge, freeing oneself from the delusion of suffering day and night like a madman due to the blows of worldly existence.

Liberation is intuiting (recognizing) through knowledge the world that appears diverse and modified due to ignorance as the non-dual, unmodified, tranquil, perfect, blissful nature of the Supreme Self (paramātmasvarūpa).

Supplement:

nityaśuddhabrahmasvarūpatvānmokṣasya |
(Adi Shankaracharya, Brahma Sutra Bhashyam 1.1.4)
"*Liberation is of the nature of Brahman which is eternally pure.*"

5. What is knowledge (jñānam)?

tadvivekena ca vastusvarūpāvadhāraṇaṃ vidyāmāhuḥ |
(Adi Shankaracharya, Brahma Sutra Adhyasa Bhasyam)
"*And they say that knowledge is the determination of the real nature of a thing through discrimination*".

Knowledge is simply understanding what is as it is through discrimination, not creating anything new. Knowledge is

vedantacorpus.org

realizing that this world of multiplicity and modifications appearing due to ignorance has no real existence whatsoever. The world as perceived through the eyes is erroneous. The deceptive mind thinks everything is true. All this is mere illusion (māyāmātra), like a dream - merely an appearance. It is simply imagined (kalpita).

Knowledge is understanding that one (Atman) is not of what appears, and has absolutely no connection to it. One is the witness-consciousness (sākṣisvarūpa) that observes the body, senses, mind, intellect, and ego (sense of "I"). One is the Pure consciousness (jñānasvarūpa) that is the substratum of all this and knows the waking, dream and deep sleep states.

Knowledge is understanding that there is no body, senses, etc. in one's true Self at all; one's Self-nature itself appears in various ways; one is all this. Knowledge is abiding as that existence (sat) where there is no birth, growth or death, where there is not even a trace of "I" or "you". All else besides this is ignorance. What people (usually) consider knowledge is actually ignorance. They mistake ignorance for knowledge and knowledge for ignorance. On this subject, the gurus say the following: *As soon as knowledge is mentioned, people misunderstand it in various ways. If someone can speak about past events or predict future occurrences, they call that knowledge. But this is not true knowledge.*

"*To know the sixty-four arts and many other skills, and to be a master in all the fourteen branches of knowledge, is not the real knowledge. A man may be an expert and skilled in a certain subject but it should not be called real knowledge. All these appear to be knowledge, but the main knowledge is quite different, and there, Prakriti, the Maya is having no scope at all for Her mischief*." (Dasabodha 5.5.31-33)

Let us now examine in detail what knowledge really means.

vedantacorpus.org

6. No one is bound

Disciple: O Guru, I am filled with sorrows without knowing my true nature. The notion that I am the body has not yet gone away. No matter how much I listen, reflect on etc., it seems fruitless. Insight does not occur. Please reveal my true nature and liberate me O Master.

Guru: Though it appears to you that you are suffering without knowing your true nature, if you reflect (vicāra) carefully, you are not really suffering. In your true nature, suffering is not present at all.

Realizing that the experience of suffering is untrue is as follows: You are lying on a bed inside your house with the door closed. In a dream, you go somewhere and suffer greatly as if caught by a tiger in a forest. Although it seems real during the dream, when you wake up, you are surprised to find yourself comfortably on the bed. Just as you realize that everything seen in the dream was unreal, similarly, if you reflect carefully, you will find that your experiences of pleasure and pain are also unreal. If your suffering were real, why don't you experience it in deep sleep? Examine your own experience.

Now you might think that the notion "I am the body" has not gone away. A wealthy man who becomes insane and believes himself to be extremely poor - will he ever actually become poor no matter how much he or others believe it? No. Just as he remains wealthy despite thinking he is poor, similarly, you can never become the body even if you think you are the body. Moreover, you are always the blissful, eternally free Self that is untouched by any sorrow or bondage.

If you were really the body as you think, no spiritual teacher could help you realize the bodiless Self. Some people consider the body, senses, mind, intellect, and ego-sense to be the Self. Others try to manifest the qualities of the Self like

vedantacorpus.org

changelessness, agelessness, and immortality in the body. But this is never possible because:

nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ |
ubhayorapi dṛṣṭo'ntastvanayostattvadarśibhiḥ ||
(Bhagavad Gita 2.16)
"*The unreal comes not into being, the real never lapses into non-being. The truth about both these has been perceived by the seers of Reality*."

With the help of inquiry (vicāra), what appears to be different is in fact not the case. What is merely imagined is unreal, like a clay-pot. Upon inquiry, it is not different from clay. First, there was only clay. In the end, there will be only clay. Only in the middle did it appear as a pot, that's all. Similarly, the names and forms (nāmarūpa) that appear did not exist in the beginning. They will not exist in the end. They only appear for a short time in the middle.

Like a tiger appearing in a movie, though he doesn't exist but only seems to exist. Similarly, the world appearing through names and forms, the body, etc., upon inquiry, don't really exist at all. The only reality is what is eternal and truly existent everywhere. This cannot be seen by the eyes, but it is not unreal. When milk and water are mixed, it appears only as milk at first glance, not as water. But a royal swan can separate the milk and water and drink only the milk. Similarly, the true nature of the Self and the illusory names and forms of the body, senses, and world are mixed together. Only the flimsy, unreal world seems to be, not the essential, real nature of the Self. Only the wise, like great swans, can separate them and grasp the essential Self, discarding the unreal non-Self of names and forms, like taking the kernel of a coconut and discarding the shell.

In reality, there is no such thing as a body, etc., in the Self. There is no saṃsāra, no world, and no states. People say these

vedantacorpus.org

non-existent things exist and should be made like the Self. This is impossible.

“*Really there is no bondage to anybody but because people have identified themselves with their bodies, they are illusioned.*” (Dasabodha 5.6.57) - this is what the Samartha (Ramdas) says.

A shepherd once brought a tiger cub and raised it among his sheep. Living among the sheep, the tiger cub believed itself to be a sheep and behaved like one. It would go about with the sheep. One day in the forest, a large tiger roared. Hearing this, all the sheep began to run away. The tiger cub also started running with them. Seeing this, the large tiger laughed and ran towards the cub, calling out loudly. Seeing the big tiger approach, the cub begged, "Great one, please don't eat me!" The tiger replied, "You too are a tiger like me; you are not a sheep. Why are you afraid? Don't be scared." Saying this, the big tiger took the cub to the bank of a pond and made it look at its reflection in the water. "Look, you also have stripes, claws, and whiskers like me," it showed. Seeing that it too had the features of a tiger, from that day on the cub realized "I am not a sheep, but truly a tiger" and began to roam fearlessly.

Was that tiger ever really a sheep as it had believed? No. Similarly, this human being, through association with the body and senses, mistakenly believes "I am the jiva (individual soul), I am the body, I am a woman, I am a man" and suffers. Seeing such a person, the Guru smiles and, just as the big tiger told the cub who thought it was a sheep, says to the one who thinks he is a jiva: "Why do you suffer? 'Tat Tvam Asi' - You are truly the Supreme Self."

Just as a pure, clear crystal appears to take on colors when placed near colored objects, but does not actually possess any color - it always remains pure and colorless - similarly, the Self is eternally pure (nityaśuddha), eternally liberated (nityamukta), and unchanging (nirvikāra).

vedantacorpus.org

You (the Self), who are unattached, appear to be associated with the body, senses, prāṇa, mind, and intellect. You seem to be male or female, subject to birth and death, experiencing happiness and sorrow, bound to worldly existence. Even though you (Atman) appear this way, none of these modifications truly exist in you. Just as a crystal remains pure while seeming to take on the colors of nearby objects, you remain pure and eternally liberated, untouched by the attributes of the body and mind such as pleasure, pain, birth, and death, despite your apparent association with them.

In a play, the owner of the company might take on the role of a beggar. Does this make him actually become a beggar? No. Though he appears like a beggar, he remains the owner. Similarly, you are the support of all the universes, the source of everything, all-pervading, and without attributes. You appear to be the body, an individual soul, male or female, by put on these costumes of body and mind. Yet you never actually become these things, nor is it possible for you to do so. Just as the company owner doesn't lose his status as owner by wearing a beggar's costume, you do not lose your true nature of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss (saccidānandasvarūpa) by wearing the costume of body and senses. You remain free from modifications, without attributes, complete, all-pervading, formless, and the embodiment of Supreme bliss.

Does the notion "I am the body" need to be abandoned only if there is a body? Does one need to be freed from sorrow only if there is a mind? First, consider: are the body and mind truly real as you previously thought? Or do they merely appear to exist while being unreal? Let's reflect on this a bit.

What is the proof that the body or the world exists? We see with our eyes, hear with our ears, smell with our nose, touch with our hands. Because these are perceived by the senses, we believe they exist. We accept that the body and the world related to it exist as saṃsāra.

vedantacorpus.org

No one would accept that there is a world that is imperceptible to the senses. What is the evidence that the senses, which are the proof for the existence of the body and world, truly exist? The senses are perceived by our mind. Therefore, we accept that the senses exist.

When the mind is deeply absorbed in some subject, the senses and their related objects are not perceived. For example, when we are engrossed in some thought, we may not see someone who comes before us. Similarly, when our mind wanders elsewhere, we may not hear what someone in front of us is saying. This applies to all the senses. The senses, body, and world depend on the mind. Without the mind, none of these exist. The mind, which is the proof for all these, does not exist without the intellect (buddhi). The intellect does not exist without the sense of "I" (ahaṃkāra). Now, does this "I" (ahaṃkāra), which is the root of the body, senses, mind, and intellect, truly exist? Upon inquiry, we find that it does not exist in deep sleep. So how can this sense of "I" be real? It is not real; it merely appears to exist.

When the very sense of "I" (ahaṃkāra) is untrue, how can the intellect perceived by it, the mind perceived by the intellect, and the senses, body, world, and saṃsāra perceived by the mind be real? None of these exist in deep sleep. Therefore, upon reflection, all these turn out to be mere illusions. Bondage and suffering become mere notions or imaginations (kalpanamātra).

Let us consider this from another perspective. We experience the world through the senses. We observe the senses through the mind. We witness the mind through the intellect. We observe the intellect through the sense of "I" (ahaṃkāra). Through what do we perceive this sense of "I"? The Self (Atman) directly witnesses this without any medium. That which witnesses the sense of 'I' without depending on anything else is our true nature.

vedantacorpus.org

Has there ever been bondage or sorrow for our true Self - the witness, the Atman, the pure Consciousness which is observing all this? In that essential nature, there is absolutely nothing else. Only if there was something else could there be sorrow or bondage. When and where there is nothing else, how can there be bondage or sorrow? There is none.

Just as a single piece of gold can appear as various types of ornaments, similarly our true self (Atman) appears as ego-sense, intellect, mind, senses, body, and the world. Just as ornaments cannot exist without gold, these manifestations cannot exist without our true self. Through this inquiry (vicāra), it is established that the body and other objects (dehādi) do not really exist, no one is bound, and no one experiences sorrow.

7. The understanding of the enlightened one (jñānī)

pūrvasiddhakartṛtvabhoktṛtvaviparītaṃ hi triṣvapi kāleṣvakartṛtvābhoktṛtvasvarūpaṃ brahmāhamasmi, netaḥ pūrvamapi kartā bhoktā vā ahamāsam , nedānīm , nāpi bhaviṣyatkāle — iti brahmavidavagacchati |
(Adi Shankaracharya, Brahma Sutra Bhashyam 4.1.13)
“*That Brahman whose nature it is to be at all times neither agent nor enjoyer, and which is thus opposed in being to the soul's previously established state of agency and enjoyment, that Brahman, am I, hence I neither was an agent nor an enjoyer at any previous time, nor am I such at the present time, nor shall I be such at any future time, this is the cognition of the man who knows Brahman*.”

Just as a wealthy man who thought he was poor due to insanity would never think "I have newly become wealthy; I was poor until now" after regaining sanity, but would realize "I was always wealthy, I had forgotten it, now I have remembered", similarly after attaining (true) knowledge, the Jñāni’s understanding is: In all three times - past, present and future - I am of the nature of

vedantacorpus.org

the Supreme Brahman (parabrahmasvarūpa), which is free from doership and experiencership. I was never the doer or experiencer even in the past; I am not now; nor will I ever be in the future. I am the ever-liberated Self, eternally free from identification with body and mind, etc.

He knows with certainty that ‘evameva ca mokṣa upapadyate |’ Brahma Sutra Bhashyam 4.1.13, “*and in this way only final release is possible*.”
Liberation does not happen by any other means. If one were to say that liberation cannot occur without the destruction of all karmas that have accumulated since beginningless time, Adi Shankaracharya comments:

na ca deśakālanimittāpekṣo mokṣaḥ karmaphalavat bhavitumarhati; anityatvaprasaṅgāt , parokṣatvānupapatteśca jñānaphalasya |
(Brahma Sutra Bhashyam 4.1.13)
“*Nor can final release be dependent on space, time and special causes, as the fruit of work is; for therefrom it would follow that the result of knowledge is impermanent and cannot be*.”

If liberation were to occur at some particular place, time or due to some circumstance like the fruits of karma, that would not be correct. Because what comes into being due to one cause can be destroyed by another cause. Then liberation too would become impermanent. In that case, we would have to say that liberation, which is the fruit of knowledge, occurs remotely somewhere at some time. That is not correct. Liberation is eternally established (nityasiddha). Liberation which is thus eternally established cannot be attained by any means other than knowledge. Therefore, it is now necessary to understand the nature of knowledge, which is the direct means to liberation.

Knowledge means to inquire into one's true nature, ascertain it with complete discrimination, and remain established in it - this is called perfect abidance in knowledge (paripūrṇa jñānaniṣṭha).

vedantacorpus.org

This is the nature of (true) knowledge. This is what the seeker of liberation (mumukṣu) should contemplate on.

In general, everyone in the world uses words like "I" and "you" in their interactions. But many people do not inquire into the true nature of these and simply hold on to their preconceived notions or what occurs to their minds as "I" and "you". But let us now carefully examine what the real nature of "I" and "you" is.

8. This body is not me

pitṛbhuktānnajādvīryājjāto'nnenaiva vardhate |
dehaḥ so'nnamayo nātmā prākcordhvaṃ tadabhāvataḥ ||
(Panchadashi 3.3)
"*The body which is produced from the seed and blood of the parents, which are in turn formed out of the food eaten by them, grows by food only. It is not the Self, for it does not exist either before birth or after death.*"

The body is born from the semen produced by the food consumed by the parents and grows with food. Therefore, this body is a modification of food. Hence, this body is not the Self. In the world, a magician creates a tree out of nowhere with his art and even shows fruits on it. But since it disappears in the next moment, it is called an illusion. Similarly, here too, a large body appears from a single drop of semen where nothing existed before, and eventually perishes. What could be a stranger illusion than this? If one truly examines the body:

A house of bones, plastered with flesh,
Covered with skin,
Tied together with nerves,
The soul dwells within.
After leaving this abode,
It burns in the cremation ground,
Becoming a mere ember to behold.

vedantacorpus.org

Eight cubits tall, this body,
With eight million pores,
Made of troublesome flesh, understand this abode.
When you, the relative, depart,
They'll cover it with firewood,
Is there any higher purpose for the body?

Bones and blood, flesh above, covered with skin,
Feces, urine, and worms reside.
Many diseases' abode,
made of five elements.
O human! Don't be fooled,
Don't trust this skeletal frame.
(Śrī Kanakadā)

This body is a house suitable for the jīva (individual soul) to reside in. Can a house ever become oneself? Just as we call someone a fool if he says he is the house he lives in, similarly the wise call a fool one who identifies himself with this body in which the jīva resides.

This body is a house built of the five elements (pañcabhūta). What is this house? The bones are like the pillars of this house, the flesh forms the walls tied together by nerves. The skin is like plaster and covering. When the jīva residing in this house departs, this body is burnt. Finally, it turns to ashes. How delusional it is to call such a body "I"!

What is there in this body anyway? It is full of bones, blood, flesh, marrow, fat, excrement, urine, worms and insects. What pure substance is there in it? None. Everything in it is impure and inauspicious filth. Filth constantly oozes out from every pore and the nine orifices. You feel disgusted seeing the filth that comes out of your own body which you consider as yours. You hold your nose. It's unbearable even to look at. When this is the case, how shameful it is to call this body, which is just a lump of filth and disgust, as "I"! Not only do you constantly carry this filthy body which is repulsive to see and touch and full of

vedantacorpus.org

excrement, but you have been deluded into thinking "I am this vessel of filth" for countless births without any shame! What could be more foolish than this?

Just as a person removes old clothes and wears new ones, the jīva leaves the old body and takes on a new body. This is called birth and death. If the body were really "I", then I should take this body along when I depart. But I don't take this body - I leave it here. Therefore, this visible body is not "I". When I live in a house, I call it "my house". Similarly, this means the house is not me. It becomes clear that just as I say "my body", I am not the body.

This body is created from the five elements. When bricks, mud, wood, iron, and lime are combined, it is called a house. If these are separated, which one is called the house? Where is the house independently, apart from this collection? It is nowhere. Similarly, the body is a combination of space, air, fire, water, and earth in a certain way. If the five elements in this body are separated, which one is called the body? Where is the body independently, apart from this collection? It is nowhere.

When the breath (air) leaves this body, they say the life force (prāṇa) has departed. When the fire element (heat) leaves, the body becomes cold. When the water element leaves, it becomes like a log. Finally, what remains is the earth element, which merges back into the earth. Where then is the body?

Are even the five elements independent? The earth cannot exist without water. Similarly, water cannot exist without fire. Fire cannot exist without air. Air cannot exist without space. Space cannot exist without the Self. From this deliberation, it is established that all these are merely imagined in the Self.

If this body alone were me, did I exist before the body was born? No. Will it exist after death? No. But I who am in this body existed before, exist now, and will exist in the end. That which did not exist in the beginning or end, and appears only now,

vedantacorpus.org

changing constantly from childhood to youth to old age, cannot be real.

Through experience it is proven that this body did not exist before, appears only now, and will not exist for me after I leave it. That which does not exist in the beginning or end, even though it appears now, is considered non-existent (unreal).

One should understand this. Just as a magician takes some papers and makes them appear as currency notes, even though they look like real notes at that time, I am as certain that they are not real notes but just papers. Similarly, even though this body appears, one should know that it does not truly exist.

How can we say something that appears does not exist? Just like in a dream - things appear but are not real. Similarly, this body too exists in the same way. Even if you see a big tiger in a movie, you know there is no real tiger there, just a projection on a screen. Why? Because before and after the movie, no tiger is seen. Similarly, this body does not exist before birth or after death. Therefore, even though it appears in between, one should know it does not truly exist.
Let us examine in another way how the body is not the Self:

ātmanastu kāmāya sarvaṃ priyaṃ bhavati |
(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.5.6)
“*For the sake of the Self, everything becomes dear.*”

In this world, a person desires all pleasures and fortunes and loves them because they want to gain happiness from them, not because they want to give happiness to them. If they don't enjoy the things they love and desire, they start to hate those things.

vittātputraḥ priyaḥ putrātpiṇḍaḥ piṇḍāttathendriyam |
indriyācca priyaḥ prāṇaḥ prāṇādātmā paraḥ priyaḥ ||
(Panchadashi 12.57)

vedantacorpus.org

“*A son is dearer than wealth, the body dearer than the son, the sense-organs dearer than the body, life dearer than the sense organs and the Self is the dearest of all*.”

In this world, people love wealth and work hard constantly enduring countless sufferings to acquire it. Even more than this hard-earned wealth, they have attachment to their children. Out of love for children, they are ready to spend all their wealth for the children's welfare if any calamity befalls them. But people love their own body even more than their children. If their own body is in danger, they will abandon their children. If they experience great suffering and do not derive any happiness, they will abandon their children.

Now, it is evident that many people - husbands and wives, fathers and children, mothers and children, brothers - leave each other and live separately. One has more love for one's sense organs than for one's body. For example, if there is a situation where the body might be hit or endangered, one takes care to ensure the sense organs are not harmed.

People love life even more than their sensory organs. If eyes, hands, feet or other sensory organs are affected by a disease and the doctor says that they must be surgically removed to keep them save, one allows the sensory organs to be lost in order to preserve their life. Many people have survived after losing their eyes, hands or feet.

One loves oneself even more than his beloved life. This is evident when people say it would be better to die than to live with great humiliation or suffer from a terrible disease. This is because they believe they will be happy if the life (or life-force, prāṇa) departs. Many people have even given up their life. From all these deliberations, it becomes clear that one is different from and happier than one’s body, senses and (force of) life. Who am I that is distinct from all these and of the nature of happiness? How do I exist? One should contemplate on and understand this.

vedantacorpus.org

Given this, it is completely wrong to think the body is the self. Now you say "I" referring to this body. When this body experiences pleasure or pain, you think "it happened to me". Thus, you try to do different things to make this body happy. If someone insults this body, you consider it an insult to yourself and get angry at them. If praised, you rejoice. Now you don't have as much love for anyone as you do for the body. You believe the body is "I" and "I" is the body. Upon examination and experiencing deep sleep, it becomes certain that this body is not me (Atman), that it has no connection to me, and that it is merely an illusion.

Let us consider how this is so. This body, which is the object of so much love, does not appear in deep sleep. At that time, I do not experience any pleasures or pains related to this body. If there is any disease afflicting it, or if there is pain from a wound on the body, I do not feel that suffering then. If someone insults this body at that time, I do not know about it. If thieves come and steal something, I do not know. Even if snakes, scorpions, or other creatures crawl over the body, I do not know. For some people, even if the body is moved to another place, they do not know. It's as if there is absolutely no awareness. At that time, there is not even a memory that "I have a body" or "I am lying down." Then why do I not experience the pleasures, pains, honors, insults, or hot and cold sensations related to this body?

If one carefully examines this through the lens of experience (anubhava), it becomes clear to everyone that one exists separately from this body, without any full connection to it. From this experience, it also becomes evident that the notion "this body is me" is incorrect.

Now, the idea that this current body is "me" is only a temporary perception, not the truth. This can also be ascertained from the experience of dreams. In dreams, another body appears, just like this one (in the waking state). At that time, I consider that body as "I." The same attachment (love) I have for this body now, I have for that body then. I feel that the pleasures and

vedantacorpus.org

pains happening to that body are happening to me. Someone who is wealthy here might appear poor there, and someone who is poor here might appear wealthy there. One who is hungry here might feel as if they've eaten a full meal there.

It is possible that one who has eaten may appear to suffer from hunger elsewhere (in a dream). Isn't it strange that this waking body, which is so dear to us, doesn't appear in dreams at all? Upon examination, this is astonishing! How can this body, which appears only in the waking state and not during dreams, and which is now the object of our affection, be my true Self? If this current body were truly me, why did I identify with a different body during the dream state?

Therefore, it is certain that identifying this present body as 'I' is merely an illusion, just like in a dream. This is certain because it is established that this body will perish. However, I alone do not perish. This body does not exist in the dream. In the dream, I am separate from this body.

From all these deliberations, it is established that this body is not me, and in fact, it does not exist at all. What follows from this is that since this body is not me, its appearance is unreal, just like in a dream. If the body itself is unreal, how can the world or the cycle of birth and death (saṃsāra), which appears together with this unreal body, be real? Thus, it is concluded that this entire universe is non-existent, just like the world in a dream.

It is everyone's experience in the world that the body is inert while the soul within it is conscious. If we determine through inquiry (vicāra) that "this body is not me," why shouldn't we understand that our true nature is the state of being the soul (jīvatva), which knows this body, resides in it, is related to it, experiences pleasure and pain, and is referred to as 'I'? As this question arises, we now need to carefully consider the nature of this state of being a soul (jīva). We should not stop our inquiry midway for any reason until our examination is complete. Just

vedantacorpus.org

as it's essential to keep digging a well without stopping until water is found once we've started, similarly, we must continue our inquiry without pause until we attain our goal of Self-realization. Therefore, let us now consider the nature of a jīva (individual soul).

9. The individual soul is not the Self, individuality is mithyā

adhiṣṭhānaṃ cidābhāso buddhiretattrayaṃ yadā |
ajñānādekavadbhāti jīva ityucyate tadā ||
(Svatmaprakashika 36)
"*One is said to be a Jīva when three entities, the substratum of all (the pure Consciousness), the reflection of consciousness and intellect appear to be one due to ignorance*."

The nature of the individual soul is such that it appears to be the foundation for the body, senses, vital force (prāṇa), mind and intellect, as well as for the waking, dream and deep sleep states, and for the entire manifest world. When the Pure Consciousness (ātmacaitanya), the inner instrument (antaḥkaraṇa), and the reflection of the Self (cidābhāsa) in it appear as one due to ignorance, that is called the individual soul.

The individual soul is also referred to as the knower (pramātṛ), the 'I' (notion), the reflection of Consciousness (cidābhāsa), and the ego-sense (ahaṃkāra) in the scriptures. The reflection of Consciousness means it appears like Consciousness, but is not actually Consciousness. Just as one's reflection (pratibiṃba) in a mirror appears like oneself but is not actually oneself, the reflection of the Self in the inner instrument (antaḥkaraṇa) appears as 'I', but is not the true Self (ātma).

Just as one's reflection in a mirror can never become oneself, even though it appears identical, similarly this sense of 'I' which is a reflection of the Self in the inner instrument can never become the true Self. It is a false 'I', a mere shadow of the Self.

vedantacorpus.org

How can one's shadow ever become oneself? If this were the true Self, it should always exist. But this sense of 'I' appears one way in the waking state, another way in the dream state, and disappears completely in deep sleep. Therefore, this individual soul that appears as 'I' is not the true Self; it is illusory (mithyā).

Just as the face reflected in a mirror cannot exist independent of the original face and is merely an appearance, similarly this 'I' (the individual soul) reflected in the inner instrument cannot exist independent of its substratum, the true Self. It has no independent existence; it is merely an appearance (ābhāsamātra).

If one inquires into where and how the face in the mirror exists, one will realize it has no independent existence. Similarly, upon inquiry, one will realize the individual soul has no independent existence apart from the true Self.

"*When with the aim to find out what actually we are we first of all negate our body, we find that we are a (that) Reality*." (Dasabodha 5.6.21)

Where am I? What am I? Who am I? If one considers and realizes its true nature, then it merges into the Self; it becomes the Self itself; it does not remain separate; it becomes as if it has no existence - then where is the jīva truly?

Just as an object that appears to oneself does not become oneself because it is different from and observable to oneself, similarly I also recognize this "I" (sense of individual self). That is, when I say "I" or state "I am like this", do I say it knowingly or unknowingly? I say it knowingly. Once known, it became visible to oneself. It became separate from oneself. Then how can the 'I' that is known and observable to oneself be oneself?

When saying "I understood this" or "I did not understand this", am I saying these two - understanding and not understanding -

vedantacorpus.org

knowingly or unknowingly? I say it knowingly. Then how can this "I" that feels it understood or did not understand be oneself? Does this 'I' exist in that essence (ātma or oneself) which knows both understanding and not understanding? It does not exist there at all.

We always see only external objects different from ourselves, but we never turn inward to see the Self that witnesses these objects. Many people do not even understand what it means to witness oneself within oneself. This is unknown. Now, one should try to stop looking outward for a while, and attempt to understand the Self that witnesses all these things (objects, thoughts etc.). Just as cloth does not remain separate from the thread when one sees the thread in the cloth, similarly if one goes beyond this sense of 'I' (the feeling or appearance) and abides in Pure awareness (Self) to observe, then this 'I' does not appear at all - it ceases to exist. This is not mere words; it is (based on) experience (anubhava). If this is experienced by everyone, how does this "I" become "Self"? It does not.

Just as an actor takes on many different roles in a play, this sense of "I" takes on many different roles in this theater of existence. It does not exist apart from these roles. It is not possible for it to exist separately. Sometimes it says "I am happy", other times "I am sad". Sometimes "I am virtuous", other times "I am sinful". Sometimes "I am wise", other times "I am foolish". Sometimes "I am angry", other times "I am calm". Sometimes "I am knowledgeable", other times "I am ignorant". Sometimes "I am rich", other times "I am poor". Sometimes "I am lustful", other times "I am desireless". Sometimes "I am the doer", other times "I am not the doer".

In this way, it takes on countless roles even in a single day or hour. How can this "I" that appears differently every moment become the true "Self"? Does this ever-changing "I" know itself? Is there an ego-sense in that which knows all this? No, there is not.

vedantacorpus.org

Waves arise one after another in the ocean. But these waves do not become the ocean. The ocean remains as the substratum of the waves, neither coming nor going. Similarly, in the ocean of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss (Satchidananda), this sense of "I" comes and goes like waves, taking different forms each moment. Just as waves are not the ocean, this ever-changing "I" is not the true Self. Just as the ocean remains as the unchanging substratum of the waves, that which exists as the foundation of this ever-changing "I" - without coming or going, appearing or disappearing - that alone is the true Self. That which knows this "I" is the Self (Atman). That which knows this 'I' and that which this 'I' cannot know – that alone is the true Self.

In the Self (Atman), there is absolutely no impulse that feels like "I". For all these reasons, the individual soul (jīva) is not the Self, and individuality is illusory (mithyā).

So far, it has been explained that the feeling (or sense) of "I" is something that is observable to oneself. Therefore, it has been shown that it is not the true Self. Now, there is the nature of the "Self" that knows this, and there is the "I". Have these not become two? Is there not something different from the Self? What is called the one, non-dual Atman - that is, the Self itself - is seen as separate due to ignorance and referred to as "I". This is called "individuality". Just as we perceive the same water as both the ocean and waves separately, we refer to the indivisible, perfect Self (Atman) itself as "I".

“*The Self is unchanged, as stated by the sages;*
It has no friction, the individual soul is false,
therefore, it never existed before;
The ego-sense that arises is inert like a pot
Isn't it difficult to sustain?
Who can escape from the treacherous ocean of samsara?

Upon inquiry, we realize that the nature of the Self (ātmacaitanya) is immutable. That is, it is changeless,

vedantacorpus.org

actionless, and perfect. Therefore, the Self has no worldly afflictions (saṃsāra) whatsoever. Now the individual soul is like a reflection of the Self, like its shadow. It does not exist independently. Therefore, the individual soul is unreal. Where is there a world for an unreal individual soul? There is none. To say it exists is incorrect.

Now if we say this world exists for the inner organ (antaḥkaraṇa) which is the cause of individuality, it is subject to modification and is not consciousness. It is inert like clay. How can an inert thing experience pleasure and pain? Therefore, there is no possibility of saṃsāra. Then to whom does this saṃsāra belong? To no one. All this is mere illusion.

bhrameṇāhaṁ bhrameṇa tvaṁ | bhrameṇopāsakā janāḥ | bhrameṇeśvara bhāvatvaṁ | bhramamūlamidaṁ jagat |
"*'I', you and the seekers – all are illusion. The Lord (Īśvara) is imagined and also an illusion. This world is truly illusory*"

The sense of "I" is an illusion; the sense of "you" is an illusion. The worship done through the illusory sense of "I" is also an illusion. The notions of God and individual soul arising from this are illusions. The appearance of a world and many beings in it is an illusion. This entire universe appears due to illusion.

This saṃsāra, pleasures and pains, birth and death, notions of male and female, merit and demerit, poverty and wealth, honor and dishonor - whatever else exists, all of it is mere illusion.

"*I am false. My speech is false. I am not real. My behavior, my walk is not real. "Me and myself" is all conceptual and false.*" (Dasabodha 9.2.37)

Everything is merely an illusion and not true reality, say the enlightened Samartha Ramdas.

vedantacorpus.org

“*The only one Brahman is permanently existing and is not distorted at any time. Anything else which only appears to the senses is illusion*.” (Dasabodha 10.6.9)

The nature of the Supreme Self alone is all-pervading. It never underwent any modification or change. Whatever appears different from It is mere illusion.

manorājyādviśeṣaḥ kaḥ kṣaṇadhvaṃsini laukike |
ato'sminbhāsamāne'pi tatsatyatvadhiyaṃ tyajet ||
(Panchadashi 13.96)
“*How to the objects of the practical world, which suffer destruction at every moment, differ from the forms created by the mind in reverie? Though they appear, the wise must abandon the idea of their reality.”*

This world, saṃsāra, sense objects and everything else that appears for a moment and disappears the next - how is it any different from a fantasy? All this is no more real than a daydream.

“*Listen, know that the offspring of a barren woman are as impossible as the worldly bonds we imagine over time. Just as flowers in the sky are unseen and do not exist, so is this play, like the horn of a hare, truly an illusion; it cannot be refuted through argument.*”

If one were to say that a barren woman had twenty-seven children, they were very clever, they had children and grandchildren, and they are all living happily - this is as impossible as saying "I am the body," "I am an individual soul," "The world exists," "There is saṃsāra." None of this actually exists; it's all mere words, like sky-flowers or a hare's horn.

From this consideration, it's clear that this body and the sense of individuality that feels like "I" are not the Self. All of this is illusory, merely a false appearance. It is established that you

vedantacorpus.org

are different from all of this. Now, let's consider how you exist separately from all this, and what is the nature of this "you."

10. One's true nature is the Self (ātmasvarūpam)

What is your true nature? What is it? To explain this in a simple and brief way: That which is the substratum of the body, etc. (dehādi), which witnesses all changes while itself remaining unchanged, which needs no other support and depends on nothing else, which exists as itself alone - this pure witness, this pure Consciousness, is you.

Let's examine this in detail through experience, scripture, and reasoning (śruti-yukti-anubhava).

Just as a person wears clothes and ornaments, I, who am of the nature of the Self (ātmasvarūpam), wear this body, the senses, the mind, the intellect and the ego-sense. Just as clothes and ornaments are not the person, these (body etc.) are not me. I am pure Consciousness that illumines all these.

In dreams, one wears a different kind of body, senses, mind, and intellect as clothes and ornaments. In deep sleep, one rejects all these and exists as oneself alone. Just as wearing clothes and ornaments does not change a person, the true nature of the Self (Atman) does not change, even if it is associated with the body, senses, mind and intellect. One's true nature is devoid all these. In deep sleep, one exists as oneself without any of these.

If we extend this enquiry further, we see that the waking state, which encompasses the personal (inner), divine and physical realms with their names and forms and their manifold nature (nāmarūpātmaka), is like a dress which the Self (Atman) wears. Then one playfully removes this dress of the waking state and puts on another dress, which is called the dream state. Finally, desiring no costumes at all, one get rid of this too. Discarding

vedantacorpus.org

these two clothes of waking and dream states, one exists as oneself alone. This is sleep (nidrā viz. deep-sleep), which the Mandukya Upanishad describes as the Self free from the conditions of waking and dream states. This examination establishes that the waking and other states are different from oneself, and that all transactions occurring in these states have no relation to Atman. Moreover, it becomes certain that these states do not exist in oneself at all. Due to ignorance (avidyā), the true nature of the Self appears as waking, dream, and deep sleep states. In reality, no state exists in the Self. Let's elaborate on this a bit more.

"*In deep sleep, the body, along with the mind and senses, is immersed in a profound state where the notion of 'I' and 'mine' is absent. The awareness of the ignorant disappears, unable to see or comprehend. Remains established as the One Self.*"

In deep sleep, this body, the senses, mind and intellect, the notions of "I" and "mine", and the perception of this world - none of these exist. That which cannot be known through any of these alone remains. That is one's true nature. That is called the nature of the Self (ātmasvarūpa). In that state, there is no imagination, no name and form, no birth and death, no pleasure and pain, no modifications whatsoever. In that state, there is no saṃsāra. That alone is the true nature, that alone is complete, that alone is Consciousness, that alone you are. The scriptures (śruti) also declare:

uddālako hāruṇiḥ śvetaketuṃ putramuvāca svapnāntaṃ me somya vijānīhīti yatraitatpuruṣaḥ svapiti nāma satā somya tadā sampanno bhavati svamapīto bhavati tasmādenaṃ svapitītyācakṣate svaṃ hyapīto bhavati || (Chandogya Upanishad 6.8.1)
"*Uddālaka Āruṇi said to his son Śvetaketu: 'O Somya, let me explain to you the concept of deep sleep. When a person is said to be sleeping, O Somya, he becomes one with Sat [Existence], and he attains his real Self. That is why people say about him, "He is sleeping." He is then in his Self'*."

vedantacorpus.org

Just as when a mirror is removed, the reflection (pratibiṃba) in it merges back into the person, similarly when the sense objects are withdrawn and the mind ceases, the reflection of the individual self in the mind disappears and unites with its true nature of Pure Being.

sarvasaṃsāradharmavilakṣaṇaṃ
sarvakriyākārakaphalāyāsaśūnyaṃ svamātmānaṃ praviśati |
(Adi Shankaracharya, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.3.19 Bhashyam)
"*… enters his own nest or abode, that is, his own self, distinct from all relative attributes and devoid of all exertion caused by action with its factors and results*."

In deep sleep, he attains his own nature which is free from all attributes of worldly existence and devoid of action, doership, enjoyment of results and the effort involved in these.

evamayaṃ svābhāvike sva ātmani sarvasaṃsāradharmātīto vartate svāpakāla iti |
(Adi Shankaracharya, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 2.1.19 Bhashyam)
"*So does it remain in its own natural self beyond all relative attributes during profound sleep*."

suṣuptāvasthāyāṃ paraṃ jyotirākāśaśabditaṃ paraṃ brahmopasampadya, viśeṣavijñānavattvaṃ ca parityajya, svena rūpeṇābhiniṣpadyate |
"*Approaching the supreme light in the state of deep sleep, i.e. the supreme Brahman denoted by the term space, and discarding the specific cognition, attains its own (true) nature.*"
(Adi Shankaracharya, Brahma Sutra 1.3.20 Bhashyam)

yatra supto na kañcana kāmaṃ kāmayate na kañcana svapnaṃ paśyati |
(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.3.19)
"…*where falling asleep he craves no desires and sees no dreams*."

vedantacorpus.org

Where the sleeping person has no desires, meaning no wishes of any kind exist, and sees no dreams - that is his true form (so'sya paramo lokaḥ | Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.3.20) “*that is his highest state*”). That is his supreme world, meaning that is his true nature.

tadvā asyaitadaticchandā apahatapāpmābhayaṃ rūpam ।
tadyathā priyayā striyā samparişvakto na bāhyaṃ kiñcana veda nāntaramevamevāyaṃ puruṣaḥ prājñenātmanā samparişvakto na bāhyaṃ kiñcana veda nāntaraṃ tadvā asyaitadāptakāmamātmakāmamakāmaṃ rūpaṃ śokāntaram | (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.3.21)
“*That is his form—beyond desires, free from evils, and fearless. As a man, fully embraced by his beloved wife, does not know àṅything at all, either external or internal, so does this infinite being (self), fully embraced by the Supreme Self, not know anything at all, either external or internal. That is his form—in which all objects of desire have been attained and are but the self, and which is free from desires and devoid of grief*.”

Adi Shankaracharya comments on this Upanishadic mantra as follows:

tathā apahatapāpma — pāpmaśabdena dharmādharmāvucyete, ‘pāpmabhiḥ saṃsṛjyate''pāpmano vijahāti' (bṛ. u. 4 । 3 । 8) ityuktatvāt ; apahatapāpma dharmādharmavarjitamityetat । kiñca, abhayam . bhayaṃ hi nāma avidyākāryam , ‘avidyayā bhayaṃ manyate' (bṛ. u. 4 । 3 । 20) iti hyuktam |
(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.3.21 Bhashyam)
“*Likewise, free from evils. ‘Evils’ mean both merits and demerits, for it has elsewhere (Br.Up. 4.3.8) been said, ‘Is connected with evils,’ and ‘Discards those evils.’ ‘Free from evils’ means ‘devoid of merits and demerits.’ Also, fearless. Fear is an effect of ignorance, for it has already been said that through ignorance he conjures terrible things (Br.Up. 4.3 20).*”

vedantacorpus.org

Here, the cause of fear, which is ignorance, is completely eradicated. The state of fearlessness means being free from ignorance. That true nature has no attributes of worldly existence (saṃsāra). Therefore, it is of the nature of fearlessness (abhaya-svarūpa). It is simply one's own true nature. That is called the nature of the Self (Atman). That Self is self-luminous consciousness (jyotisvarūpa).

Then why can't I recognize that I am like this there? The reason for this is as follows: The cause is not recognizing non-duality. There, the individual soul (jīva) is so thoroughly embraced by the Self, which is of the nature of pure knowledge, that it knows (cognizes) nothing. Not-knowing means that it is due to not having the ability to know (cognize something), it is of the nature of knowledge (jñānasvarūpa) itself. Even so, the reason for not-knowing is that there is nothing other than oneself to know there.

In order to recognise (something), there must always be something other than yourself. Only then can recognition take place. The existence of something other than oneself and the act of recognising - all this occurs only due to ignorance. There (i.e. deep sleep) is no ignorance; there is no second entity. One alone exists as the form of (pure) knowledge.
Therefore, this nature of the Self, which is self-luminous, has all desires fulfilled and is self-satisfied. This means that here the Self itself is all desires. There are no objects of desire. If objects existed, suffering would occur. Hence, this is said to be a state free from suffering. This is one's true nature.

Just because this body etc. is not me, how can I be the Supreme Self? In deep sleep, since the body etc. do not exist, how can my true nature be the Supreme Self? And only in deep sleep is my nature formless, unchanging, actionless, unattached and eternally liberated. That's not the case now, is it? This is not correct. Although the true nature of a person is indeed the Supreme Self, due to ignorance one has deluded

vedantacorpus.org

oneself, forgotten one's true nature, and the illusion has arisen that the body etc. is oneself (Atman).

The true nature (of the Self) eternally illuminates these objects and states of changeable nature, while itself never becoming entangled in any state. The very notion of duality is ignorance (avidyā), and it is from ignorance that the various states appear. Let's examine this in detail.

Let us first look at the nature of the Supreme Self (Paramatma) and then examine the statement ‘I am the Supreme Self’.

11. What is the nature of the Supreme Self?

satyaṃ jñānamanantaṃ brahma |
(Taittiriya Upanishad 2.1.1)
“*Brahman is truth, knowledge, and infinite*”

In the Vedas, the Supreme Self is called Brahman. The meaning of Brahman is "that which is the greatest." Because the Supreme Self is greater than everything else, it is called Brahman in the scriptures. Brahman is described as having three characteristics (lakṣaṇa):
Truth (satyam), Knowledge (jñānam), and Infinite (anantaṃ).

Truth is that which remains unchanged in whatever form it exists, and does not change once it is known. Once its nature is ascertained, it does not deviate from that nature - that is Truth (satya), that is Brahman, that is the Supreme Self. Truth here doesn't mean that which appears true in everyday (vyavahāra) transactions; it means that which is eternally true.

That which has a certain form but then changes or abandons that is untruth (asat) or unreality (anṛta). Therefore, all effects (kārya) or products are unreal (asat) because they are subject to change and modification. Brahman, being unchanging, is never born or created.

vedantacorpus.org

How does Brahman exist? Just as thread exists in all cloth, and gold exists in all ornaments, Brahman exists in everything. Just as there is no cloth without thread, and no ornaments without gold, there is nothing without the existence of Brahman. This existence that pervades everything is Brahman or the Supreme Self (paramātma).

Thus, the existence that is present in everything is Brahman. Since nothing can exist apart from it, Brahman is the cause of everything. Clay is the cause of a (clay) pot. But clay is inert. Similarly, although Brahman is the cause of the world, unlike other material causes, Brahman is not inert. Therefore, it is said that Knowledge (jñānam or Consciousness) is Brahman.

When it is said that Knowledge is Brahman, it does not refer to the distinct cognitions in the mind that perceive objects. For Brahman is described as Truth and infinity. Knowledge that appears in the mind is limited. It encompasses the action of knowing and an object of knowledge. Therefore, if Brahman were the knower, it would not be infinite. And if it had special qualities of being a knower etc., it would not be pure existence.

Hence, the word 'Knowledge' is used as a qualifier for Brahman along with 'Truth' and 'Infinite' (Brahman is always existent, limitless, actionless). For all these reasons, when it is said that Knowledge is Brahman, it means pure Awareness alone, mere Consciousness. (Brahman is the Pure Consciousness that witnesses all the cognitions in the inner instrument or mind). It is said that Brahman is Truth, Knowledge and Infinite. So far, the nature of Brahman as Truth and Knowledge has been explained. Now let us examine Brahman's infinity.

Infinity is of three kinds - in terms of space, time and objects. Let us examine. Space is infinite in terms of location, because it has no measurable range. Space exists everywhere. There is no place without space. However, space is not infinite in terms of time or objects because it is an effect, meaning it is born (caused). That which is born ends at some point in time. Since

vedantacorpus.org

space is born, it will end at some time. Therefore, space is not infinite in terms of time. Similarly, Brahman is not limited in terms of time, because it is not an effect - it is not born (caused). Brahman is infinite in terms of time because it was never born.

How can Brahman be infinite in terms of objects?

Only if there is another object that is different from itself can this object be limited by another object. Thus, limitation is seen in objects that are separate from each other. However, Brahman is not separate from any object. It is non-different from everything. This means Brahman completely permeates all objects. Therefore, Brahman is infinite in terms of objects.

How is Brahman non-different from everything? Because Brahman is the cause of all things like time, space, and everything else. To say that Brahman becomes finite when compared to the effect(s) is not correct, because just as cloth, being the effect, does not truly exist separately from the thread as its cause. The effect called cloth is merely imagined (kalpita) in the cause called thread. The effect or modification is just a name. Similarly, the effect called space and other objects do not truly exist separately from the cause called Brahman. Everything is merely imagined in Brahman due to ignorance.

Thus, Brahman is the cause of all-pervading space, Brahman is infinite in terms of space. Since it is not an effect, its infinity in terms of time is established. Since there is no other object different from it, its infinity in terms of objects is also established. In this way, Brahman is infinite in terms of space, time, and objects.

As explained above, that which is of the nature of Existence, Consciousness, and Infinity (saccidānandasvarūpa) is Brahman or Paramatma. Such is the ultimate nature of one's Self; that is, it is one's true nature; it is the essence of "I". The nature of Paramatma is the fundamental nature of this "I". The meaning

vedantacorpus.org

is: I am of the nature of Paramatma. Let us examine this from the standpoint of experience (anubhava-dṛṣṭi)

12. I am the Supreme Self

I am of the nature of Existence (Sat): The nature of Existence (sadrūpa), Consciousness (cidrūpa), and Infinity (anantasvarūpa) is ascertained to be Brahman or the Supreme Self. Now, if I am indeed of the nature of the Supreme Self, do I possess the characteristics of Paramātma? If so, how are they existing in myself? Let's examine.

First, let's deliberate on how I am of the nature of Existence (Sat). I exist before the birth of this body and other faculties, and I will continue to exist after they perish. The proof for this is found the scriptures:

avināśī vā are'yamātmā |
(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.5.14)
" *This Self is indeed indestructible.*"

sa vā eṣa mahānaja ātmājaro'maro'mṛto'bhayo |
(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.4.25)
" *That great, birthless Self is undecaying, immortal, undying, fearless*."

na jāyate mriyate vā kadācid |
(Bhagavad Gita 2.20)
"*He is not born, nor does He ever die*."

antavanta ime dehā nityasyoktāḥ śarīriṇaḥ |
(Bhagavad Gita 2.18a)
“*These bodies of the embodied (Self), which is eternal, are said to have an end*.”

vedantacorpus.org

Therefore, I am of the nature of Existence. This body and senses, etc. appear one way in childhood, another in adolescence, differently in youth, and yet another way in old age, finally ceasing to exist. When childhood is present, adolescence is not; when adolescence is present, youth is not; when youth is present, old age is not. These states do not coexist. But I remain the same, without increase or decrease, unchanging through all these states. Therefore, I am of the nature of Existence.

In the waking state, there is no dream or deep sleep; in the dream state, there is no waking or deep sleep; in deep sleep, there is no waking or dream. But I remain the same, unchanging through all these states. Therefore, I am of the nature of Existence.

How was I during deep sleep? Upon experimental examination, it's impossible to say I was like this or like that. There's no way to describe it as being one way or another. It is true that I existed then (in deep sleep), which cannot be described.

That Pure existence, devoid of any perception or appearance, which cannot be described as this or that, is the true nature. That itself is the Supreme Self, that itself is Brahman, that itself is me.

I am of the nature of Consciousness: Let us now deliberate on how I am of the nature of Consciousness. The waking state, the body, senses, mind, intellect, ego-sense, etc. that appear in this state, and all the objects seen - all these are inert and do not appear in the dream state. Similarly, in the dream state, a world of objects seen, and the body-sense complexes are all subject to change and leave no trace in deep sleep. But I alone remain unchanged as the Witness, observing their presence and absence equally in all states - waking, dream and deep sleep.

vedantacorpus.org

By being the Witness (sākṣī) and knowing all of them, I am of the nature of Consciousness. Who is aware of this entire visible universe? Is it not me? Therefore, I am of the nature of Consciousness. Who is aware of the changes happening to this body etc. in childhood, youth and other stages? Is it not me? Therefore, I am of the nature of Consciousness. Who is aware of the functioning of the senses, the activities of the mind, the abilities of the intellect? It is me. Therefore, I am of the nature of Consciousness. The senses are the gateways for perceiving the visible world; the mind cognizes them; the intellect cognizes the mind; what (or who) is aware of this all-knowing intellect? It is the "I" (ego-sense). That which witnesses this "I" is the real "I" (Self, Atman). Therefore, I am of the nature of Consciousness. When sleeping in a dark room with doors closed, by what lamp or sun or moon was the vast dream world illuminated? Who was there? Did I not illuminate it all by my self-luminous nature? Therefore, I am of the nature of Consciousness (cidrūpa). The scripture declares on this matter:

astamita āditye yājñavalkya candramasyastamite śānte'gnau śāntāyāṃ vāci kiñjyotirevāyaṃ puruṣa ityātmaivāsya jyotirbhavatītyātmanaivāyaṃ jyotiṣāste palyayate karma kurute vipalyetīti ॥ (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.3.6)

“*When the sun and the moon have both set, the fire has gone out, and speech has stopped, Yājñavalkya, what serves as the light for a man?’ ‘The self serves as his light. It is through the light of the self that he sits, goes out, works and returns.’ ‘Just so, Yājñavalkya.*”

Prior to this mantra, when Janaka asked by what light this person transacts, Yajnavalkya replied that he transacts by the light of the sun. When asked what happens when the sun sets, he said the moon becomes the light. When the moon also sets, what then? He said fire becomes the light. When fire is extinguished, what then? He said one transacts by the light of speech, or following the sound of words.

vedantacorpus.org

In this mantra, it is asked - when the sun has set, the moon has set, the fire has gone out, and speech is silenced, by what light does this person then transact?

The answer given is: Then the Self alone is his light; it is through the light of the Self that he transacts. The meaning is: It is established that the Self is self-luminous, of the nature of Consciousness. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, when asked "Which is the Self?", the answer given is:

yo'yaṃ vijñānamayaḥ prāṇeṣu hṛdyantarjyotiḥ puruṣaḥ sa |
(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.3.7)
"*This infinite entity (Puruṣa) that is identified with the intellect and is in the midst of the organs, the (self effulgent) light within the heart (intellect).*"

From all these proofs, it is established that one's true nature is self-luminous consciousness. In the dream state, who illumined the sun, moon, stars, earth, sky, hills, mountains, rivers, plants, trees, houses, monasteries, and all living beings that appeared? It was I alone who illumined and witnessed all these. Therefore, I am of the nature of consciousness. This is what the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad states:

atrāyaṃ puruṣaḥ svayaṃ jyotirbhavati |
"*In this state the man himself becomes the light.*"
(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.3.9)

If I were inert, it would not have been possible to be aware of deep sleep, where there is no trace of the visible world including the body and senses, mind etc. However, in deep sleep, I exist as Pure consciousness (cidrūpa). That is why, after waking up, I say, "*I slept happily; there was nothing there*." Isn't this our experience? Therefore, it is established that I am not inert but of the nature of pure Consciousness.

I am infinite: My true nature is infinite, meaning without end. Let us deliberate upon. Now, I appear to be limited and finite in

vedantacorpus.org

the form of this body and other attributes. Am I in this limited, finite form of the body and other attributes during deep sleep? The answer must be no. Because there is no body or other attributes there. Yet, I still exist separate from this state. What is my true nature there (in deep sleep), how vast and where is it - is this possible to find out? It is not possible. Just as we can describe a form in the waking state, e.g. a boy, an adult, an old man, a woman, a man, white, red, etc., in deep sleep it is not possible to say ‘my true nature is like this’ or ‘I exist in this form’. Similarly, just as I can say "I am this much" or "my true nature is this much" in terms of length, thickness, thinness, weight, and other specifications, it's not possible to say "I am like this" or "I am this much" in that state. Just as I can say "I am in this place, at this time," it's not possible to say I was in such a place or at such a time then (during deep sleep).

In deep sleep, I exist beyond all descriptions, free from the limitations of space, time and objects. Such is my infinite true nature. Moreover, the “Self” (consciousness) that witnesses all states like waking, dream, and deep sleep, cannot be described as "it is like this" or "it was like this." Can the consciousness that witnesses all these ever cease to exist? No. Therefore, I am infinite.

eko devaḥ sarvabhūteṣu gūḍhaḥ sarvavyāpī
sarvabhūtāntarātmā |
karmādhyakṣaḥ sarvabhūtādhivāsaḥ sākṣī cetā kevalo
nirguṇaśca || (Svetasvatara Upanishad 6.11)
“*The one shining being is the one who is (as though) hidden in all beings, pervading all as the Self within all beings, the seer of all activities, the inhabitant of all beings, the witness; the knower, complete and without attributes*.”

- thus proclaims the Shruti. Generally, everyone believes that there is a vast world, that they exist as an individual in this world, that they experience waking, dream, and deep sleep states in this body, that they experience these states one after another, that after some time passes, they will one day leave

vedantacorpus.org

this world, and that this world will continue to exist even after they are gone. But is this the truth? This needs to be examined.

How is that possible? Just as the dream state appears within me, and in that state there appears a dream world with a body, senses, mind, and intellect that seem to be "me," along with many other beings like me, similarly, this waking state appears within me, who am of the nature of the Self. In the waking state, a gross world appears and, in that state, there appears a world with a body, senses, mind, and intellect that seem to be "me," along with many other beings like me, various objects that cause pleasure and pain to all, the sun, moon, hills, mountains, rivers, and other inert and sentient objects. However, neither this state, nor this world, nor this body and other objects can appear independently of me, who am of the nature of the Self. From this, what follows is: The notion that this is an independent world in which I am an embodied being experiencing various states is proven wrong. Rather, this state, this world, and this body are all appearing as imaginations within me. I am the infinite (substratum) for all of this - this is the conclusion.

We have seen that the states of consciousness occur one after the other. However, in reality, this is not the case. Objects or events bound by time and space can be said to occur sequentially. But since each state is bound to its own time and space, it is incorrect to understand the states as occurring one after another in a temporal sequence.

In the infinite Self, these finite states and the entire universe are superimposed. They appear and disappear. That is, when the world appears in the waking and other states in the form of time and space, although it seems infinite, when one realizes that these states are superimposed (imagined) in the Self alone, one understands that the Self is infinite beyond even this infinity.

vedantacorpus.org

In reality, oneself who is the Witness, there is neither waking, nor dream, nor deep sleep. All these are mere imagination (kalpanāmātra). One who is detached from and illumines all these states of waking, dream and deep sleep - that Pure Witness Consciousness alone is the infinite Self.

13. I am actionless (niṣkriya)

When one contemplates on the Self (ātmavicāra) in this way, as long as one abides in one's true nature as the Supreme Self, one is established in the bliss of Brahman without even a trace of sorrow.
However, when one stops contemplating and engages in actions and worldly affairs (vyavahāra), this bliss seems to disappear. Many spiritual aspirants doubt how to solve this. The solution is to contemplate and see. What is then intuited?
This bliss does not arise anew, as we now understand. Rather, we are of the nature of bliss itself.

Just as we do not develop a contrary notion about our name even if we do not repeatedly recall it, similarly the bliss of our true nature does not disappear even if we do not remember it. Moreover, it does not diminish or get distorted due to any reason. I am eternally the Self which is the nature of bliss. In reality, I am of the nature of the Self that is actionless.
In reality, I do not perform any actions or engage in any worldly affairs. There is no activity in me whatsoever. Truly, I remain actionless. The Shruti: "niṣkalaṃ niṣkriyaṃ śāntaṃ | (Shvetashvatara Upanishad 6.19) “*who is partless, actionless, tranquil*.” is evidence.

One might think: "But do I not evidently experience that I am the doer and the enjoyer of experiences?” The answer to this is: Shouldn't we inquire whether this is merely an appearance or if it is real? We cannot accept anything without examination.

vedantacorpus.org

For example, don't we even appear to perform various actions in dreams and experience their results as pleasure and pain? Were these actions and experiences real? No, weren't we actually just lying comfortably on the bed without doing or experiencing anything?

Just as in dreams, though it seemed that I was doing and experiencing various things, in reality I remained unchanging, actionless, and unattached - not doing or experiencing anything. One should understand that this is also the case in the waking state.

Here's an illustration: One day, a king ate an extravagant meal, was being served by attendants, and lay down on a swan-feather bed to rest. He fell into a light sleep and had a dream. In the dream, enemies attacked his kingdom, defeated him in battle, and he lost his kingdom. He became a forest-dweller, suffering greatly for some time. Once, after going without food for three days, he finally found some food and sat under a tree to eat it. Just as he was about to eat, dogs came and fought with each other, spoiling the food by mixing it with dirt. Then he cried loudly, saying, "The morsel that fell into my hand is now lost! What misfortune has befallen me!" Immediately he woke up. Then he realized that he had eaten a full meal of five delicacies and was lying on a bed. He was amazed and understood that everything he had seen until then was merely an illusion of his mind, and he felt relieved.

Similarly, here's another example: A beggar came asking for alms and was sleeping in a dharamshala. Then he had a dream. In it, the king of that country had died. The king had no children, so all the important people gathered and decided to place a garland in the trunk of the royal elephant, declaring that whoever the elephant garlanded would become the king of that country. The elephant came to where the beggar was and placed the garland on him. Then everyone made him the king. After that, he was married to a princess and they had children. While he was living happily like this, enemies came and

vedantacorpus.org

besieged the kingdom. A terrible war followed. Then he screamed in panic. Immediately he woke up. When he opened his eyes, he realized, "I was never a king, nor did enemies come to the kingdom; all this was just a dream."

uttamādhamabhāvaścetteṣāṃ syādastu tena kim |
svapnastharājyabhikṣābhyāṃ na buddhaḥ spṛśyate khalu ||
(Panchadashi 6.218)
“*Some may say that these people represent grades of enjoyment from the lowest to the highest. But of what use is it? A man when awake derives no good from the dreams in which he may have played the part of a king or a beggar*.”

Just as the king in the dream lost his kingdom and became poor, was he really poor? No. Did he really go begging? No. Similarly, did the beggar really become a king? No. Just as the king appeared to become a beggar in the dream but was not really a beggar, and the beggar appeared to become a king but was not really a king, likewise even though we appear as saṃsāris (transmigratory beings) in the waking state, we should understand that we are essentially asaṃsāris (non-transmigratory). Our involvement in worldly affairs, experiencing pleasure and pain, receiving honor and dishonor, wealth and poverty, bondage, birth and death, merit and demerit, male or female - all these are like the king's dream. Is there any activity in the Self, which is the substratum of both the waking and dream worlds? The true nature of the Self does nothing; there are absolutely no actions in it.

If this is my true nature, isn't it a complete mistake to say "I am the doer" (kartṛ) or "I am the experiencer" (bhoktṛ)? The sense of doership and experiencership appears in the waking and dream states, but they do not exist in one's true nature, which is pure experience (anubhavasvarūpa). As Acharya Adi Shankaracharya says:

na ca dehādyātmapratyayabhrāntisantānavicchedeṣu suṣuptisamādhyādiṣu kartṛtvabhoktṛtvādyanarthaḥ upalabhyate

vedantacorpus.org

tasmāt bhrāntipratyayanimittaḥ eva ayaṃ saṃsārabhramaḥ, na tu paramārthaḥ |
(Bhagavad Gita Bhashyam 18.66)
"*And no agency or enjoyership or any other evil of the sort is experienced in sleep, samadhi and similar states in which there is a break in the continuity of the illusory notions identifying the Self with the body, etc. Wherefore the illusion of samsara is due solely to an illusory notion and is not absolutely real.*"

After all these deliberations, it is established that I am actionsless.

14. This world (saṃsāra) is like a dream

The entire universe, which appears as living beings and inert entities, is a dream that appears in the nature of the Supreme Self.

"*I was earlier explaining that this life is a prolonged dream in which people are entrapped, saying with attachment, "This is my wife, this is my money, this is my daughter and this is my son, etc.*" (Dasabodha 7.1.20)

This world is a long dream; It is a dream that is experienced while asleep. This is a dream due to ignorance. What is a dream? Is it something that exists? No, it never exists, even when it appears, it is not real. Not understanding this, people think the world truly exists.

Guru Samartha Ramdas says that people, considering "my house, my money, my wife, my children" as truly real, get entangled in attachment, aversion, grief, delusion etc. and experience various sorrows while struggling. To show that there is no difference between dream and waking states, and that both are equal, the Mandukya Karika states in the Vaitathya Prakaraṇa:

vedantacorpus.org

svapnajāgarite sthāne hyekamāhurmanīṣiṇaḥ |
bhedānāṃ hi samatvena prasiddhenaiva hetunā ||
(Mandukya Karika 2.5)
"*The thoughtful persons speak of the sameness of the waking and dream states on account of similarity of objects (perceived in both the states) on grounds already described*."

What is the difference between waking and dream? There is no difference. In all respects, the dream state is like the waking state; the waking state is like the dream state. Only without inquiry does waking seem more real and dream less real; waking appears true and dream false.
Upon inquiry (vicāra), both waking and dream are seen to be equally unreal. Let us examine this a little.

Why do we say waking is real and dream is false? We directly experience the waking state. We see dreams. The dream world disappears upon waking. Therefore, we consider waking real and dream false. But this is incorrect. Just as the world of dreams becomes perceptible to us in the state of dream, so too the waking world becomes perceptible to us in the waking state.

Are you first in the waking state or in the dream state, and then in the waking world or in the dream world? Therefore, both states are equal.

Let us consider this further in another way. Just as in waking we accumulate various objects for our pleasure, so too in dreams we accumulate many things. We understand that certain objects bring us happiness while others cause sorrow. Thus, we strive to avoid things that lead to sorrow and acquire things that bring happiness. There (in a dream) too, just like here, a body seems to experience pleasure and pain
We have the same attachment to that body as we do to this one. We experience many pleasures through that body.

Moreover, it appears that we have been experiencing pleasure and pain in this way for a long time, both there (in dreams) and

vedantacorpus.org

here (waking-state), and are set to continue experiencing them in the future. Just as here, there also seem to be many people, some of whom we consider our own and others as distinct. At that time, it all seems real.

But isn't it obvious to all of us after waking up that the body and everything else seen in the dream - from the objects to the ways of enjoyment, the sense of being an enjoyer and all other living beings - is all unreal, a mere appearance? Similarly, even in the waking state, the body and everything else - the entire world with its various objects of enjoyment, ways of enjoyment, the sense of being an enjoyer, and the notion of "I" - are all mithyā, meaning mere appearances.

When a doubt arises about the falsity of what appears in the waking state, we should ask ourselves: Didn't everything that appeared in the dream seem real then, just like the things here? Did we not recognise it as false at the time (of dreaming)? Even in future dreams, we will not be able to recognise them as dreams and therefore as false while we are dreaming. So, what's the difference between dream and waking states?
We considered the dream to be [just like] the waking state then, didn't we? So how can we be sure that this waking state is not as unreal as a dream? Is there any evidence? Is there any difference between dream and waking states? The waking state appears real during its time. Similarly, the dream state appears real during its time. However, the waking state does not exist during dream time, and the dream does not exist during waking time. Therefore, both waking and dream states are illusory. By considering that there is no difference between these two, the notion of a real waking world disappears.

Just as a lawyer argues in favor of his client, claiming his side is right and the other is wrong, this intellect, like a partisan lawyer, holds onto the waking state's identity and argues that waking is real and dream is false. This is because it belongs to the waking state. Similarly, the intellect bound to the dream state, which

vedantacorpus.org

belongs to that state, argues that it is real at that time because it fits that condition.

Now, if we directly observe these two states consisting of the three types of worlds – inner, divine, and physical - from the perspective of the witness consciousness (sākṣicaitanya-dṛṣṭi) that simultaneously witnesses both the waking "I" attached to the waking state and the dream "I" attached to the dream state, it immediately becomes clear that both are merely appearing and disappearing states, appearances superimposed on the Self.

As long as we identify and think in terms of the 'I', the ego-sense and pride will persist in that very place. Only when we look from the experiential perspective (anubhavasvarūpa- dṛṣṭi) of the "Self" (Atman) does the doubt disappear. That awareness of the witness, like a judge, gives the verdict. The Katha Upanishad says:

svapnāntaṃ jāgaritāntaṃ cobhau yenānupaśyati |
mahāntaṃ vibhumātmānaṃ matvā dhīro na śocati ||
(Katha Upanishad 2.1.4)
“*Knowing that great and all-pervading Self by which one sees (the objects) both in the sleep (dream) and the waking states, the intelligent man grieves no more*.”

Here, both the waking and dream states appear as superimpositions on the Self. One should firmly grasp that the Self, which pervades all these states with its consciousness, is distinct from these two visible states.

That is, the ‘I’ in the waking state, the ‘I’ sense and the entire inner world, the physical world before us, the divine world above us, along with the rules of space, time, action, cause and effect - all of these appear. Similarly, "I" in the dream state, the sense of "I" and all worlds appear within the Self's true nature. Here, states cannot exist without the "I".

vedantacorpus.org

Though both appear and disappear, from the perspective of the witnessing Self that illuminates their appearance and disappearance, It becomes clear that waking and dream are equal.

Some may wonder, "Aren't there three - the Self, and these two (waking and dream) states?"
However, once the mind internalizes the understanding that without the Self, conditions and states do not exist, the thought of oneself having been influenced and operating through these states begins to dissolve. Moreover, from the perspective of self-knowledge, it becomes evident that these states arise from ignorance. From this vantage point, whether the world we perceive exists in a waking state or in a dream, it becomes apparent that all of it is (essentially) the Self. This world appears to us as such because we have not yet realized the Self. With the realization of the Self, it becomes clear that *'All this is indeed the Self'* – From the perspective of the Absolute Self (ātmadṛṣṭi), this worldly existence is like a dream. One should practise establishing oneself firmly in the non-dual witness nature by contemplating this topic thoroughly.

15. Even the world is of the nature of the Supreme Self

As stated in the Upanishads (śruti):

ātmaivedaṃ sarvam |
(Chandogya Upanishad 7.25.2)
“*Atman alone is all this*.”

brahmaivedaṃ sarvam |
(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 2.5.1)
“*This is Brahman: this is everything*.” (Transl. V. Panoli)

sarvaṃ khalvidaṃ brahma |
(Chandogya Upanishad 3.14.1)
“*All this is Brahman.*”

vedantacorpus.org

The Vedantic scriptures declare that all this is indeed of the nature of the Self, this entire universe is certainly of the nature of the Supreme Self. As Saint Samartha Ramdas says:

nabhī vāvare jā aṇūreṇu kāhī |
ritā ṭhāva yā rāghavevīṇa nāhī ||
(Manache Shloka by Samartha Ramdas 196)
“*He resides in every atom that fills the sky.*
He manages all, right down to the smallest.
Without the Self in it, an empty spot nowhere can be found.”

This means that the Supreme Self of the nature of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss (saccidānandasvarūpa) is fully existing even in the smallest atoms, blades of grass and pieces of wood. There is no place where He (paramātma) is not; moreover, nothing exists apart from Him.

When we say the Supreme Self is existing in everything, it does not mean in the sense that sugar is existing in a sweet dish. For in a sweet dish, both sugar and flour are mixed together. Similarly, it does not mean that the world exists and the Supreme Self is mixed in it like sugar in a sweet. Rather, it is like the thread in cloth, clay in pots, or gold in ornaments. Just as cloth is nothing but thread, pots are nothing but clay, and ornaments are nothing but gold - similarly, the world is nothing but the Supreme Self.

Just as ornaments appear as different forms of gold, the entire animate and inanimate universe appears as different forms of the Supreme Self alone. The Supreme Self appears as God, individual soul, inert matter, and being.

As Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra says in his "Advaitataravali":

"*In a wooden elephant, the wood becomes hidden*
Similarly in the world, the Supreme Self is hidden
And in the Supreme Self, the world becomes hidden.
Just as wood appears in the form of an elephant,

vedantacorpus.org

But remains wood without becoming an elephant,
Do name and form appear separately?
Their appearance is imagined, not real. Like wood,
Brahman appears as the world,
But there is no world separate from it."

If an elephant is carved from a piece of wood, doesn't it appear just like an elephant? At that time, it does not appear as a piece of wood. But upon examination, we see that the piece of wood only appeared as an elephant - there was no real elephant there. The form and the name of the elephant were imagined in the wood, weren't they? The elephant did not appear independently of the piece of wood.

Similarly, the Supreme Self, which is of the nature of existence-consciousness-bliss, formless, attributeless and actionless, appears as the world.

Just as the elephant did not appear independently of the piece of wood, the world does not appear independently of the Supreme Self. Just as the elephant that appeared in the wood never really existed and its appearance was imagined, the world that appears in the Supreme Self also never really exists. Everything that exists and appears is only of the nature of the Supreme Self.

sadeva somyedamagra āsīdekamevādvitīyam |
(Chandogya Upanishad 6.2.1)
"*Somya, before this world was manifest there was only existence, one without a second*."

Just as a lump of gold existed as one, without modifications, before becoming (appearing as) ornaments, similarly the Supreme Self alone existed as one, without a second, perfect (paripūrṇa) and of the nature of Supreme bliss, before the world (apparently) came into being - so says the Chandogya Upanishad.

vedantacorpus.org

yadidaṃ kiñca tatsṛṣṭvā । tadevānuprāviśat |
(Taittiriya Upanishad 2.6.1)
“*After creating whatever is there, It "entered into" that very thing*.”

seyaṃ devataikṣata hantāhamimāstisro devatā anena jīvenātmanānupraviśya nāmarūpe vyākaravāṇīti |
(Chandogya Upanishad 6.3.2)
“*That God [Existence] decided: ‘Entering into these three deities [fire, water, and earth], as the individual self, I shall manifest myself in many names and forms*.”
In this way, He himself entered into the created world in the form of the individual soul (jīva).

It is not that the Paramatman has transformed into the world like milk turns into curd. If that were the case, the unchanging and actionless nature of the Paramatman would be lost. Rather, the meaning is: just as gold remains unchanged in its essence while appearing as various ornaments, so the formless, unchanging Supreme Self appears as the world, living beings, inert matter and essence (life principle) in various forms through Māyā without undergoing any change.

For example, on a canvas, even though nothing really exists there, when painted with colors, various forms like houses, humans, animals, birds, trees, mountains etc. appear. Similarly, the world which does not truly exist, appears in Paramatman through Māyā.

Just as a sleeping person in a dream becomes many - husband, wife, children, relatives, friends, strangers, houses, trees, mountains, rivers, lakes, sun, moon, everything - the Paramatman appears as the manifold world. Is what occurs in a dream real? No. Because the person who sleeps is one, the person who wakes up is one, and the person in between is also one. But through the imagination it appears as many.

vedantacorpus.org

Similarly, before the creation of the world, there was only the formless, attributeless, actionless Supreme Self. In our experience, it's like being in deep sleep. After the dissolution of the world, there will be only the Supreme Brahman. Since there is only one true Existence at the beginning and at the end, there is also only one in the middle. Even if it appears as many in the middle, just as one appears as many in a dream yet in reality is one, there is only one Supreme Self. There is no actual change. It only appears to be so due to Māyā.

This is what the Atmabodha Upanishad says:

brahmādikīṭaparyantāḥ prāṇino mayi kalpitāḥ |
budbudādivikārāntastaraṅgaḥ sāgare yathā ||
(Atmabodha Upanishad 2.14)
"*Like the bubbles, waves, etc., in the ocean, so all beings from Brahma down to a worm, are imagined in Me*." – thus, the scripture teaches.

When it is said "The Self alone is real" or "There is only one Reality", we should not think in terms of numbers like one or two. Because numbers require time and space, but the Self transcends time and space. So, the scriptures speak of it as "non-dual". Therefore, this world, which appears to be separate, is in its essence (tattva, astitva) the Self alone. According to the Shruti statements (śrutivākya), 'All this is indeed Brahman' and 'All this is the Self', one should understand that all this is indeed the Self (Atman).

16. The mind is imagined (kalpita) in the Self

It is very difficult for the mind, which is habituated to think of objects other than the Self, to remain fixed on the objectless (nirviṣaya) Self. What should be done? How can the mind easily abide in the Self? Many seekers have such doubts. The answer is: Trying to forcefully restrain the mind will only be difficult. Can one catch one's own shadow by chasing it? No, because the

vedantacorpus.org

shadow is not an independent object that can be grabbed. Similarly, the mind is not an independent entity to be controlled.

In reality, a shadow does not exist apart from oneself. Moreover, there is never a shadow within oneself. Is it not so? If you try to capture the mind, you cannot catch it either, because like the shadow of a person, it is imagined in oneself. The mind never exists independently, apart from the Self.

Are the waves that arise in the ocean independent? No, never. When the ocean moves (swells), it appears as waves on the surface; if you go deeper, there are no waves; there is just the ocean alone. This means that the waves are never separate from the ocean. This is the truth: the ocean itself appeared as waves.

Similarly, this mind is like a wave appearing in the ocean of the Self, which is of the nature of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. Just as waves cannot exist separately from the ocean, the mind cannot exist separately from the Self. Just as the ocean itself appears as waves when it moves, the Self appears as mind and thought when it seems to move.

If you go within, just as there are no waves and everything is just the ocean, this mind and these thoughts - where do they come from, how did they arise? Upon inquiry, you'll discover there is no mind at all. Thoughts are coming. Apart from this, where and how do thoughts come out? If you trace them back and look at their source, the thoughts are not thoughts; the mind is not a mind. Then it becomes no-mind; it becomes the Self itself. If we inquire in this way, where is the mind as a separate entity? It's nowhere to be found. We are seeing the Self itself as the mind. That's all. The mind has no fixed nature of its own. If it did, it would not undergo changes. It takes various forms and changes. Water itself has no color, but it appears to take on the color of whatever it is mixed with. Similarly, the mind has no fixed form.

vedantacorpus.org

When the mind perceives objects through the senses like sound and touch, it appears to take on the form of those objects. Just as water doesn't have a separate color when mixed with dye, the mind doesn't remain separate but appears to take the form of the objects it perceives.
By letting go of its association with objects and their memories, it turns inwards and touches its true nature; the mind becomes no-mind, meaning it becomes the Self.

One notion (or thought) doesn't exist within another notion. The notion of a house doesn't contain the notion of a tree, and the notion of a tree doesn't contain the notion of a river. If you remove the notions like house, tree, and river, then the notion doesn't remain as a notion. It dissolves into its substratum of Pure Consciousness.

Various thoughts (or notions) do not occur simultaneously. One thought comes only after another has gone. For example, when the thought of a temple arises, the thought of a monastery or an Ashram is not there. When the thought of an Ashram is present, the thought of a river is not there. So, the thoughts come one after the other. The thought of a river comes only after the thought of a temple has disappeared. The thought of a temple comes only after the thought of a river has disappeared. So, when one thought is present, another is not. But the Self, which is the witness of all this, the substrate of all this, which witnesses these thoughts (notions) coming and going, remains unchanged (nirvikāra) and unaffected in all this.

When one abides in one’s true nature and observes, then there are no thoughts (notions) there. Nothing remains separate from oneself. If one contemplates (vicāra) in this manner, one sees that the mind and the entire world that appears through the mind are merely imagined (kalpita) in the Self (ātma), which is of the nature of Pure Consciousness.

In a cinema, when one sees that it is just a screen on which the movie is projected, one does not need to keep verifying that it is

vedantacorpus.org

a screen. Similarly, regardless of what is shown in the movie, knowing that everything is just a screen and nothing else, one should contemplate that the only reality is Pure Consciousness, which is the true Self, and realise that the mind does not exist in the Atman.

Just as everything that appears or is experienced in the cinema is unreal, one should constantly contemplate that everything that appears or is experienced by the mind that comes and goes is also unreal.

When we see green algae in the water, do we ever delude ourselves that it's just algae and not water? Never. Just as we understand that there is only water and nothing else, even when we see algae, why should we delude ourselves when we see this “mind-algae” in the water of the Self? One should contemplate and understand that it (i.e. mind) never exists.

This entire world is merely imagined in oneself, which is Atman, and does not truly exist. Forgetting and not-knowing oneself which is of the nature of Pure Consciousness, mistakenly thinking this world is real and that some things in it are favorable while others are unfavorable, one becomes entangled in attachment and aversion. Thinking "I must do something, I must attain something, I must know something," the Jīva (individual soul) is bound by the threefold fetters of ‘What is to be known, done, attained (jñātavya, kartavya, prāptavya)’ and experiences suffering without resting even for a moment by constantly doing something.

By the grace of the Guru and his teachings, when one realises (intuits) within oneself that all this is like a dream or a magician's trick, merely an appearance or māyā (māyāmātra), that one is the very Self of the nature of Supreme Bliss and that there is nothing other than oneself, then one is freed from the bonds of ‘What is to be known, done, attained’ and attains peace.

vedantacorpus.org

If one is of the nature of the actionless (niṣkriya) Self, where is one's duty? If there is nothing other than oneself, what is to be attained? If everything is oneself alone and there is nothing else separate, what is there left to acquire? How can there be anything to acquire if there is nothing different from oneself? If one is Pure Consciousness, what is there left to know?

Only when this is properly realized through direct experience (anubhava) does one attain complete, eternal Supreme peace (paramaśānti). As the identification with the body ceases (through true knowledge), the realization of the Self (ātmabuddhi) is attained.

17. Contemplation on one's True Nature

Spiritual aspirants (sādhaka-s) should constantly examine on who they really are; they should think about their true nature; they should recall; they should contemplate on the nature of the Self; they should inquiry - this is what the scriptures advise. Since examine and attempting to abide in one's true nature that is the object of inquiry is the main spiritual practice, let us now consider how to practice Self-inquiry.

This body is not me; the senses are not me; the vital energy (prāṇa) is not me; the mind is not me; the intellect is not me; memory is not me; the ego-sense is not me; the waking state is not me; the dream state is not me; deep sleep is not me. I am the Consciousness that witnesses all these, that which cannot be known by anything else. I am the witness, which perceives the body, senses, vital energy (prāṇa), mind, intellect, ego-sense and the three states, that which cannot be seen by any of these. I am the substratum that supports the body, senses, vital energy (prāṇa), mind, intellect, ego-sense and the three states, but that which has no other support. I am the Reality which appears as waking, dream and deep sleep due to ignorance, but which itself undergoes no change and remains as it is without becoming waking, dream or deep sleep.

vedantacorpus.org

I am the immutable Self, which is Self-knowledge. I am that which permeates everything, both inside and outside, and which has no divisions such as inner and outer. I am the Reality, free from Māyā - the illusion conjured by ignorance, consisting of the manifested and unmanifested (vyākṛtāvyākṛta). I am the Reality that is the substratum of this Māyā.

Just as waves, foam and bubbles appear and disappear in the ocean, I am that Reality in which all these universes appear and disappear. I am the true Self, which is devoid of pleasure and pain, birth and death, merit and demerit, male and female distinctions, all imaginations, and all empirical transactions - that which simply exists as itself. I am the formless, attributeless, actionless Self.

How is it intuited (anubhava)? It is intuited as a state free from all mental modifications, like deep sleep, indescribable as this or that. How can this be realised? As the Upanishad states:

yenedaṃ sarvaṃ vijānāti taṃ kena vijānīyādvijñātāramare kena vijānīyāditi | (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 2.4.14)
"*Through what should one know That owing to which all this is known —through what, O Maitreyī, should one know the Knower?*"

This means just as our eyes that see everything cannot see themselves, the Self that knows everything cannot be known as an object. If known, it would become different from oneself and hence not the Self. So how does one know (intuit) the Self? The nature of knowledge itself is the Self. Knowing is the cessation (nivṛtti) of the not-self qualities superimposed on the Self, rather than objectifying the Self.

As stated in the Bhagavad Gita 18.50 Bhashyam by Adi Shankaracharya: tasmāt jñāne yatno na kartavyaḥ, kiṃ tu anātmani ātmabuddhinivṛttāveva |
"*Hence, effort is not needed for knowledge (of Brahman), but only for the removal of the notion of what is not-Self*."

vedantacorpus.org

From our experiential perspective (anubhava-dṛṣṭi):

svapno jāgaraṇe'līkaḥ svapne'pi jāgaro na hi |
dvayameva laye nāsti layo'pi hyubhayorna ca ||
(Aparoksanubhuti 57)
"*The dream (experience) is unreal in waking, whereas the waking (experience) is absend in dream. Both, however, are non-existent in deep sleep which, again, is not experienced in either*."

The dream-state does not appear in the waking state, and the waking state does not appear in the dream-state. Neither waking nor dream states exist in deep sleep. Deep sleep does not exist in either waking or dream states. Only the Self, which is one's true nature, exists as the substratum for the appearance and disappearance of these states. When we say "there is a state," we should understand that it is the Self alone that exists, and the "state" is merely superimposed on it.

These states can only appear in the light of the Self, which is of the nature of Witness (sākṣisvarūpa). There is no other support for their existence. Here, the term "Witness" does not imply that the states exist in one place and the Self exists elsewhere, illuminating those states. Rather, the scriptures attribute (āropa) the quality of 'Witness-hood' (sākṣītva) to the Self to indicate that the Self is unaffected by the states (which are imagined due to ignorance - avidyākalpita), just as a witness in the world remains unaffected by the events it observes.

Since different times and places appear within the states themselves (waking and dream), the states are not subject to time and space.

Similarly, the Self, being of the nature of Consciousness that knows these states along with their time and space, is not limited by time and space. When the seeker contemplates this deeply with one-pointed focus, his mind abandons the states and rests in the Self as the Self itself.

vedantacorpus.org

nivṛttasyāpravṛttasya niścalā hi tadā sthitiḥ |
viṣayaḥ sa hi buddhānāṃ tatsāmyamajamadvayam ||
(Gaudapada Karika 4.80)
“*Then, there follows a state of stillness, when the Consciousness has become free from attachment and does not engage Itself (in unreal things). That is the object of vision to the wise. That is the (supreme) state of non-distinction, and that is birthless and non-dual.*”

As soon as one realizes (intuits) that the states are superimposed on oneself, the intellect withdraws from thinking about the states. When one realizes that there is nothing else but That alone, and when one cannot see anything else separately, one becomes actionless (apravṛtta). Then, that intellect becomes steady (niścala) and identical with the Self. This experience is available only to those whose minds have become steady through discrimination (viveka) and one-pointed concentration; hence it is said to be known only by the wise.

This process of withdrawing the intellect and establishing it in the Self is called "Self- Inquiry" (ātmānusandhāna). Although from an external perspective the intellect seems to exist, from the experiential viewpoint (anubhava-dṛṣṭi) it becomes one with Brahman. Just as a piece of wood thrown into a blazing fire becomes fire itself, so does the intellect merge into Brahman.

Just as the knots and crookedness of firewood, though seemingly present even after burning, have truly become fire itself, similarly the intellect that abides firmly in the nature of the Self through Self-inquiry and discrimination, though appearing as intellect from the perspective of worldly people, actually abides as the non-dual, unborn Self itself as stated in 'tat ajaṃ sāmyaṃ advayaṃ’ (*That sameness is unborn and non-dual*). This is the greatness of Self-Inquiry.

This becomes experiential (anubhava) for spiritual practitioners right here (in the right moment of discrimination).

vedantacorpus.org

jāgratsvapnasuṣuptyādiprapañcaṃ yatprakāśate |
tadbrahmāhamiti jñātvā sarvabandhaiḥ pramucyate ||
(Kaivalya Upanishad 17)
"*That which manifests the phenomena, such as the states of wakefulness, dream and deep sleep, I am that Brahman" – realising thus one is liberated from all bonds*."

The "waking world" includes not just the state of wakefulness and all that appears in it as separate from one's body, but also this body, senses, vital energy (prāṇa), mind, intellect - everything that constitutes the sense of "I". Some people don't understand or accept that all these belong to the world of phenomena. How so? Just as this world is made of the five elements and is an object of perception, similarly everything from the body up to the sense of "I" is also made of the five elements and is an object of perception for the Self, which witnesses them directly.

Therefore, all that appears and can be spoken of is the phenomenal world. If the body and other elements were separate from the world and were themselves the Self, they would have to exist always. But in dreams, none of these waking body-mind instruments appear along with the Self. Hence, everything from the ego-sense of "I" down to the body belongs to the perceived world.

That which illuminates the entire state called wakefulness and all the world that appears in it, that by which this is known, and that which illuminates the state called dream and all the world that appears in it, and similarly that which illuminates the state called deep sleep where nothing is seen but one experiences happiness - that is the nature of the Supreme Self.

Just as the screen is the substratum for the movie images, with the movie appearing and disappearing on the screen itself, similarly, that which is the substratum for the appearing of the states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep, and that in which

vedantacorpus.org

all these appear and disappear - that is the nature of the Supreme Self.

From the experiential point of view (anubhava-dṛṣṭi), where do waking, dream and deep sleep appear and disappear? They appear and disappear in oneself alone. Who is the knower, illuminator and witness of all these? It is I alone. Therefore, I am the Supreme Self.
The Kaivalya Upanishad proclaims that when one realizes this, one becomes liberated from all bondage.

In this way, through various reasonable arguments and direct experience, one should constantly contemplate on the nature of the Self without fail, moment to moment. By continuous practice, the notion of identifying with the body will disappear and true Self-knowledge will arise (except for high qualfied aspirants, see “Section 1:16. Who is a true disciple?).

18. Characteristics of the state of perfection

yathodakaṃ śuddhe śuddhamāsiktaṃ tādṛgeva bhavati . evaṃ munervijānata ātmā bhavati gautama ||
(Katha Upanishad 2.1.15)
“*As pure water poured into pure water remains the same only, so does the Self of the thinker who knows thus become, O Gautama.*”

Just as when pure water from a small vessel is poured into pure water in a large vessel, it becomes one with it and cannot be separated again, similarly, one who has correctly understood their real nature from a true guru as being indivisible, complete, eternally free (nityamukta), self-existent, and of the nature of pure knowledge (consciousness), and who constantly contemplates on the nature of the Self, removing the perception of difference (bhedadṛṣṭi) caused by conditioning adjuncts (upādhi-s), becomes one with the absolute Pure Consciousness

vedantacorpus.org

that is not different from oneself - this is what the Katha Upanishad proclaims.

yathā nadyaḥ syandamānāḥ samudre'staṃ gacchanti
nāmarūpe vihāya ।
tathā vidvānnāmarūpādvimuktaḥ parātparaṃ puruṣamupaiti
divyam ॥ (Mundaka Upanishad 3.2.8)
"*As rivers, flowing down, become indistinguishable on reaching the sea by giving up their names and forms, so also the illumined soul, having become freed from name and form, reaches the self-effulgent Purusha that is higher than the higher.*"

Like how the Ganga, Yamuna and other rivers flowing separately under different names merge into the ocean and lose their individual names and forms to become one with the ocean, so the spiritual seeker who has realised (intuited) his true nature as the Self through discrimination and inquiry sheds the names and forms born of ignorance and attains the Supreme Person who is the cause and support of all, the Self of all, who dwells in everyone's heart. In other words, he becomes one with the Supreme Self - this is what the Mundaka Upanishad says.

19. How is the vision of the enlightened one (jñānī-dṛṣṭi)?

yastu sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmanyevānupaśyati |
sarvabhūteṣu cātmānaṃ tato na vijugupsate ||
(Isha Upanishad 6)
"*He who perceives all beings in the Self alone, and the Self in all beings, does not entertain any hatred on account of that perception.*"

He who recognises all living beings and the entire universe of animate and inanimate objects in his true nature as the Self, i.e. sees nothing as separate from the Self or from himself, and sees himself in all beings, i.e. in everyone - this is the meaning.

vedantacorpus.org

One who sees (recognizes) the Self as the Self of all beings, as the witness and Pure Consciousness beyond all attributes, which is the essence of all bodies, senses and thoughts - just as it's one's own Self - such a person sees (recognizes) the non-dual Self in all beings and doesn't feel aversion towards anything. Attachment and aversion arise only when one sees something as separate from oneself.
By seeing (intuiting) the perfect pure Self everywhere and realizing that there is nothing separate from oneself, one does not criticize anything.

yasminsarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmaivābhūdvijānataḥ |
tatra ko mohaḥ kaḥ śoka ekatvamanupaśyataḥ ||
(Isha Upanishad 7)
"*When a man realizes that all beings are but the Self, what delusion is there, what grief, to that perceiver of oneness?"*

As described above, for one who has realized the ultimate Truth and knows (intuits) the true nature of reality, when the entire world appears to be nothing but the Self, where is delusion or sorrow? Sorrow and delusion are the root of desire and action, and they occur only to the ignorant. For the wise person (vivekī) who has understood the non-dual nature of the Self, there is no sorrow or delusion arising from ignorance.

The vision of the enlightened one (jñānī-dṛṣṭi):
He himself is the king and the beggar, the enemy and the friend, the man and the woman, the child and the old person, the learned and the ignorant, the sinner and the saint, day and night, sun and moon, the five elements, all the worlds, the directions, and even Lord Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. All the moving and non-moving beings in the entire universe are himself alone. Whatever is seen or heard, it is all himself. He realizes there is nothing separate from himself. Thus, seeing everything as himself alone, the enlightened one becomes fulfilled; he finds joy within himself and remains content in the nectar of the bliss of the Self (svānandāmṛta). He himself is that. He has no desire for anything else.

vedantacorpus.org

This is what the Lord says in the Bhagavad Gita:

yastvātmaratireva syādātmatṛptaśca mānavaḥ |
ātmanyeva ca santuṣṭastasya kāryaṃ na vidyate ||
(Bhagavad Gita 3.17)
"*Whoever delights in the Self alone, finds gratification in the Self and is satisfied with the Self – for him there is nothing to perform.*"

Just as the ignorant person delights in sense objects and revels in them, the wise (jñānī) person delights in his true Self and revels in it. He becomes absorbed in it. Just as an ordinary person is satisfied by sense enjoyments, the wise person is always satisfied by abiding in the Self (ātmaniṣṭha), by being established in Brahman (brahmaniṣṭha), that is, by being rooted in his true nature. Just as most people derive pleasure from attaining external objects, he derives joy from his own Self; he experiences bliss within himself. In other words, he has no desire for any kind of sense enjoyment. Such a realized soul (jñānī) has no duties to perform. He has nothing left to do. He is as described:

tadbuddhayastadātmānastanniṣṭhāstatparāyaṇāḥ ।
gacchantyapunarāvṛttiṃ jñānanirdhūtakalmaṣāḥ ॥
(Bhagavad Gita 5.17)
"*Those whose intellect (knowledge) has attained that (brahman), (because) self is (recognized as) that (brahman), (because) commitment is in that (brahman), (because) having that (brahman) as the ultimate end, having had (karma) impurities shaken off by knowledge they gain no rebirth.*"

Just as the ignorant person always keeps his mind and intellect focused on sense objects, the wise (jñānī) always keeps his mind and intellect focused on the Supreme Self, which is his true nature and the embodiment of Supreme bliss. Just as firmly as the ignorant person identifies with the body, senses, vital force, mind, intellect and ego-sense, and considers himself a

vedantacorpus.org

man or woman, the wise (jñānī) is firmly established in the knowledge that he is the birthless, deathless, formless, unchanging, actionless, all-supporting, ever-free, blissful Supreme Self, which is beyond sorrow, supremely peaceful, all-pervasive and perfect.
He firmly and finally knows himself as the Self. Mentally renouncing all actions, he remains established in his true nature which is the Supreme Brahman. Knowing that there is nothing higher or more blissful than his own Self, he revels in the Self, enjoys in the Self, and delights in the Self.
Through resting in knowledge (jñānaniṣṭha), he removes all sins and defects that are the cause of worldly existence and rebirth, as well as ignorance, and attains the Supreme state free from repeated births.

20. Guidelines for for spiritual seekers

Spiritual practitioners (sādhaka-s) should do the following:
Just as disciples diligently practice and acquire the knowledge that seems naturally to those who have attained the position of a teacher, seekers should diligently practice and acquire the state that is natural and spontaneous to the enlightened ones. This is true spiritual practice.

This is what Adi Shankaracharya refers to when he says:

sarvatraiva hi adhyātmaśāstre kṛtārthalakṣaṇāni yāni tānyeva sādhanāni upadiśyante, yatnasādhyatvāt |
(Bhagavad Gita Bhashym 2.54)
“*For in all the scriptures without exception, dealing, with spirituality, whatever are the characteristics of the man of realization are themselves presented as the disciplines for an aspirant, because these (characteristics) are the result of effort.*”

In order to attain such eligibility, one must undertake all (spiritual) practices. This can be achieved only by the grace of the Guru and God. For that, we must make utmost efforts.

vedantacorpus.org

Let us pray that the compassionate Self, which is the innermost Self of all, may bless everyone.

Jaya Jaya Raghuvīra Samartha!

Remembering the Founder (abridged)

Sri Shankara Bhagavatpada, who is always remembered for his great work of reviving Vedic dharma and infusing new life into Vedanta. Sri Sri Satchidanandendra Saraswati Swamiji (formerly known as Yellambalase Subrahmanya Sharma, born on 5.1.1880), who had attained Brahman (brahmibhūta) was attracted to Sri Shankara's Vedanta tradition.

He cleared away the rust and dust that had accumulated on Shankara's powerful commentaries on the Prasthanatraya through deep study, and contemplation discovered the true essence of Shankara's Vedanta. He became the authorized spokesman, exponent, and modern Shankara of Advaita Vedanta in the 20th century.

Immersed in reading, contemplating, lecturing, and writing Vedanta texts from childhood until the age of 96, Sri Sri, who was a living example of the saying, "One should spend time in Vedanta contemplation from waking in the morning until going to sleep, and from birth until death," earned the apt title of Purusha Saraswati. His more than 200 works in Kannada, English, and Sanskrit have immortalized him in the world of Vedanta. They are a boon to spiritual seekers who don't know Sanskrit.While serving as a school teacher, he learned Sanskrit out of spiritual inclination and became a seeker.

During that time, his association with Sri Hosakere Chidambaraiah, later the mantra initiation from Sri Gondavali Maharaja and the bhāṣya śāntipāṭha from Sringeri Jagadguru Sri Sacchidananda Shivabhinava Nrisimha Bharati Mahaswamiji enhanced his dedication and diligence.

vedantacorpus.org

After settling in Holenarasipura in 1937, he dedicated himself completely to Shankara Vedanta. He took sannyasa in 1948. Sri Sri was known for his purity, precise writing, adherence to principles, and strict observance of rules. The Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya, which he founded in 1920, continues to be a veritable center for the propagation of spiritual knowledge.

The revered Swamiji attained brahmabhūta on August 5, 1975. His Mahasamadhi Peetha is in Holenarasipura. To this day, as pure consciousness, he continues to be the power of Adhyatmaprakasha Karyalaya.

OM TAT SAT

vedantacorpus.org